

STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 96

18p

The pioneer settlers endured the seemingly endless voyage across the light years only to find that life would be hazardous on—

THE PROMISED PLANET

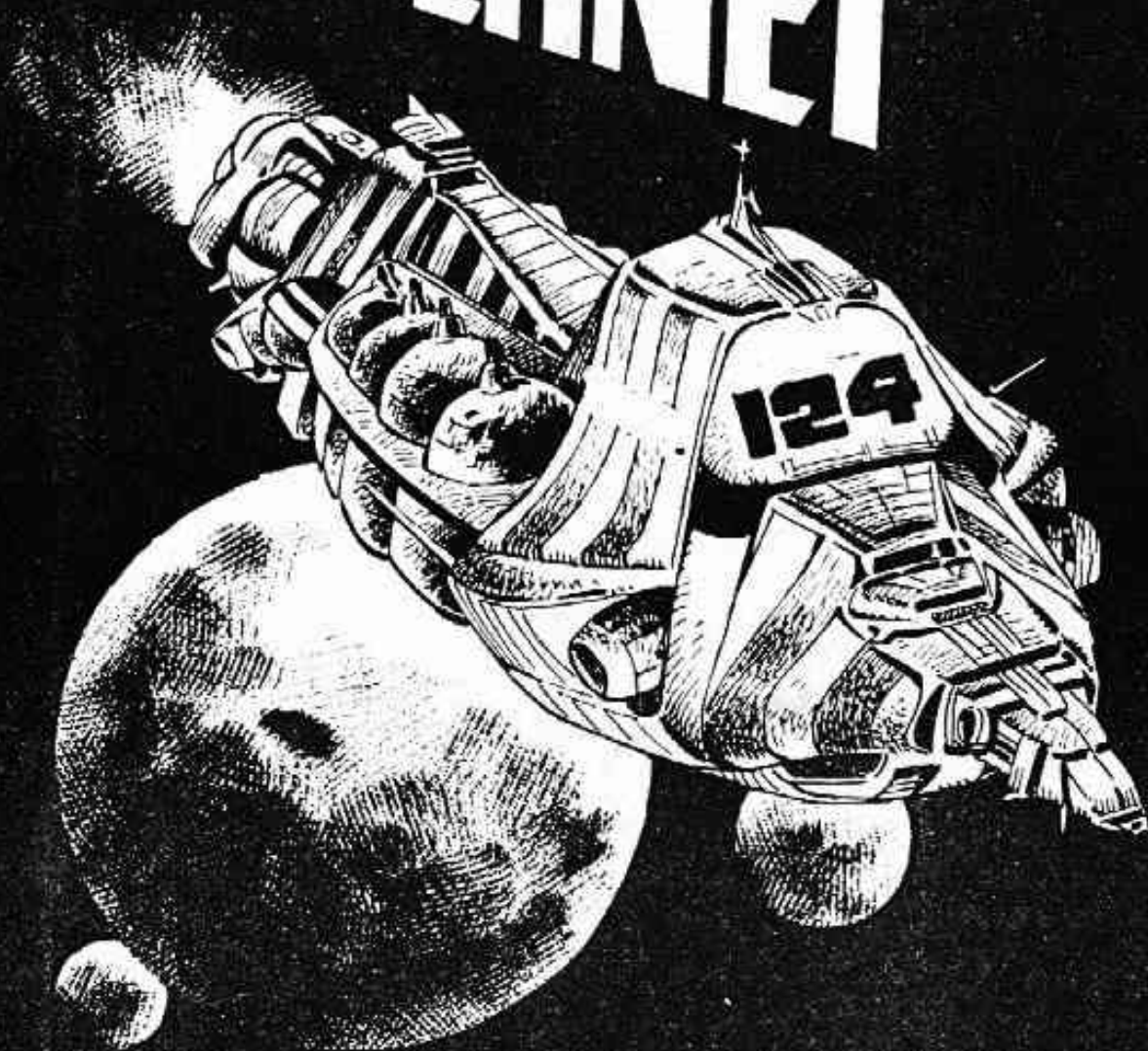


STARBLANK



DURING THE 21ST CENTURY COLONY SHIPS LEFT EARTH FOR THE FAR REACHES OF SPACE. AS THEY DIDN'T HAVE FASTER THAN LIGHT DRIVE, THEY WERE COMMITTED TO 1000 YEAR JOURNEYS TO FIND NEW HOMES. GENERATION AFTER GENERATION LIVED AND DIED WITHOUT EVER SETTING FOOT ON A PLANET. WHEN EVENTUALLY THEY ARRIVED IN THE SECTOR OF SPACE DESIGNATED A COLONY AREA THEY FOUND IT COLONISED—BY PEOPLE WHO HAD LEFT EARTH ALMOST A THOUSAND YEARS LATER THAN THEMSELVES AFTER F.T.L. SHIPS WERE DEVELOPED. THE NEWCOMERS, WERE TREATED WITH SUSPICION, AND OFTEN FEAR BECAUSE THEY WERE THOUGHT TO BE THE CARRIERS OF LONG ERADICATED DISEASES. MOVED FROM ONE SYSTEM TO ANOTHER, THEY SEARCHED FOR...

The PROMISED PLANET

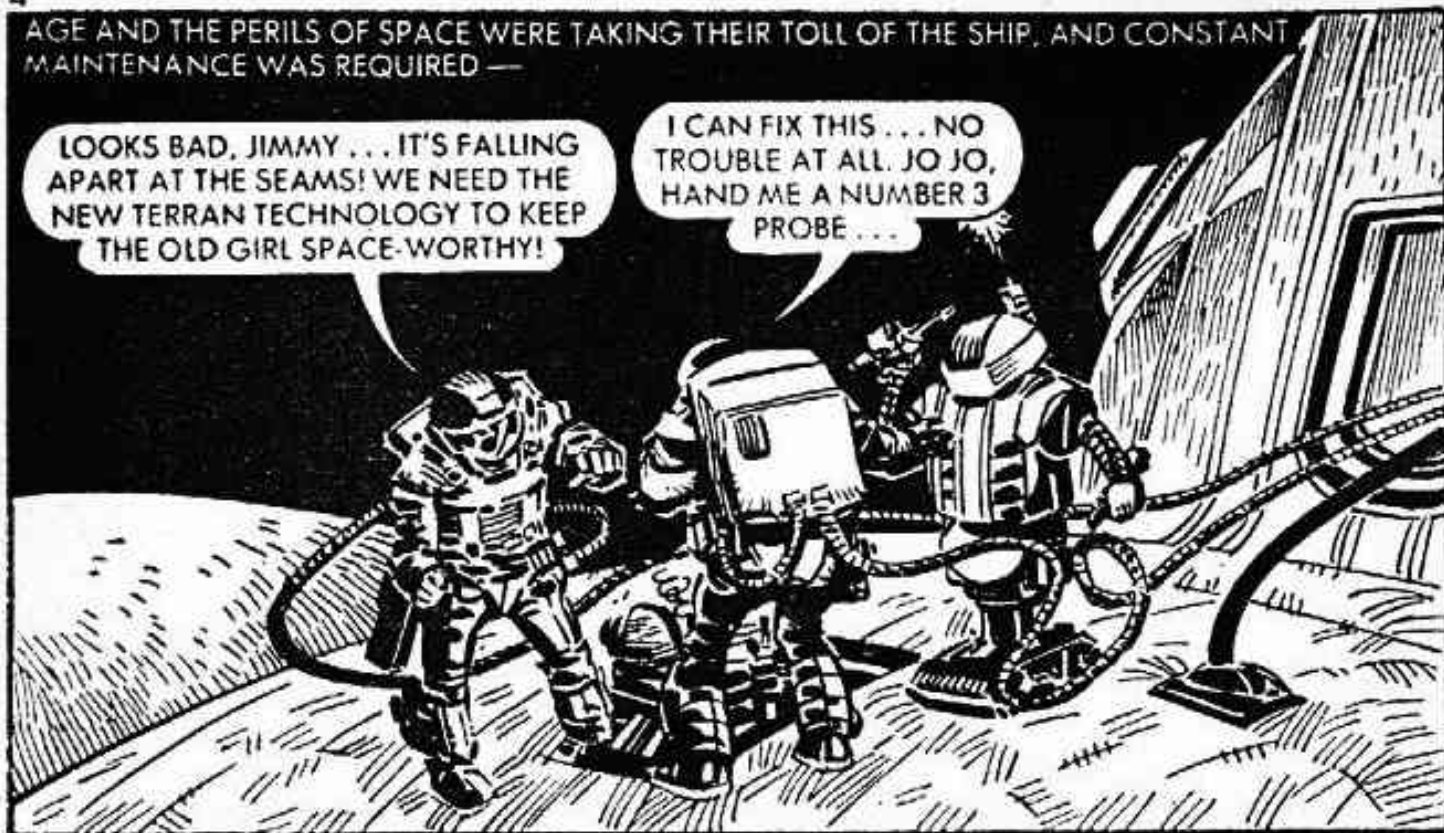


THE AGED COLONY SHIP, VOYAGER 124, PASSED CLOSE TO THE PLANET ZARDON, LAST OUTPOST OF THE TERRAN FEDERATION AND HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE FRONTIER FLEET. AHEAD LAY THE BADLANDS — THE DESOLATE, DISPUTED BUFFER ZONE BETWEEN THE FEDERATION AND THE PREDATORY KRAL EMPIRE.

AGE AND THE PERILS OF SPACE WERE TAKING THEIR TOLL OF THE SHIP, AND CONSTANT MAINTENANCE WAS REQUIRED —

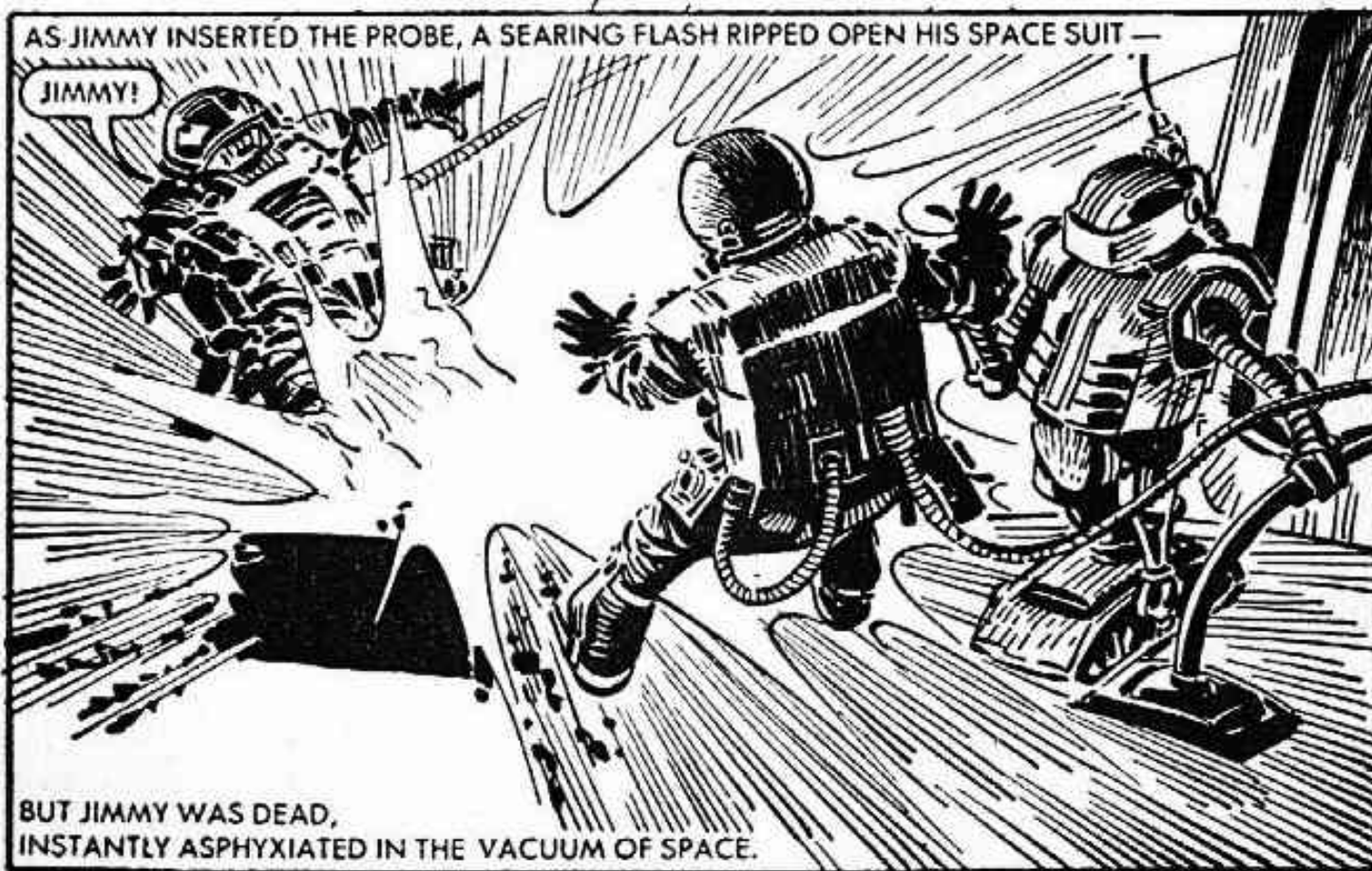
LOOKS BAD, JIMMY . . . IT'S FALLING APART AT THE SEAMS! WE NEED THE NEW TERRAN TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP THE OLD GIRL SPACE-WORTHY!

I CAN FIX THIS . . . NO TROUBLE AT ALL. JO JO, HAND ME A NUMBER 3 PROBE . . .



AS JIMMY INSERTED THE PROBE, A SEARING FLASH RIPPED OPEN HIS SPACE SUIT —

JIMMY!



BUT JIMMY WAS DEAD,
INSTANTLY ASPHYXIATED IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE.

ANGERED BY THE DEATH OF HIS FRIEND, MIKE CONFRONTED VOYAGER'S GOVERNING COUNCIL WHICH WAS LED BY HIS ELDER BROTHER, JON.



IT'S TIME YOU FACED THE TRUTH! VOYAGER'S KEY SYSTEMS ARE FAILING TOO OFTEN... EACH TIME THEY ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO REPAIR. A MAJOR DISASTER IS INEVITABLE IF WE CONTINUE TO RELY ON OUR OWN RESOURCES — JIMMY'S DEATH IS ONLY THE FIRST!

OUR PRIME OBJECTIVE IS TO FIND A NEW PLANETARY HOME. IT IS YOUR DUTY TO ENSURE ALL OF VOYAGER'S SYSTEMS FUNCTION CORRECTLY. DO NOT INTERFERE IN THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL!



THE TERRANS HAVE CLAIMED EVERY SUITABLE PLANET FOR THEMSELVES, AND MOVED US ON FROM ONE STAR SYSTEM TO ANOTHER. TO THEM, WE ARE NOTHING MORE THAN PRIMITIVES!

WITH OR WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION, I AM GOING TO ZARDON!



HE SEEMS DETERMINED TO DISOBEY OUR INSTRUCTIONS. SINCE HE IS YOUR BROTHER, HIS DESERTION WOULD REFLECT BADLY UPON YOU. I SUGGEST WE TELL HIM . . .

I AGREE.



VERY WELL! LISTEN CAREFULLY . . . YOU MUST TELL NO ONE ELSE. EXCITEMENT AND PANIC MUST BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS!



THE TERRANS HAVE OFFERED US A PLANET, KNOWN ONLY AS MX-7. IT IS IN THE BADLANDS BUT THE TERRAN AUTHORITIES SEE IT AS A WAY OF EXTENDING THEIR INFLUENCE. IT IS A HOSTILE PLANET, BARELY HABITABLE BY HUMANS, BUT WE ARE WELL TRAINED TO COMBAT HARSHIP. IT IS OUR LAST CHANCE — BEYOND LIE THE KRAIS WHO ARE LIKELY TO DESTROY US ON SIGHT. OUR SEARCH IS AT ITS END!



DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT MAKES IT
EVEN MORE VITAL THAT WE GO TO
ZARDON FOR HELP. WE MUST LEARN THE
NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR THE HAZARDOUS
JOURNEY AHEAD. IF WE DON'T LEARN—
WE'RE DOOMED.

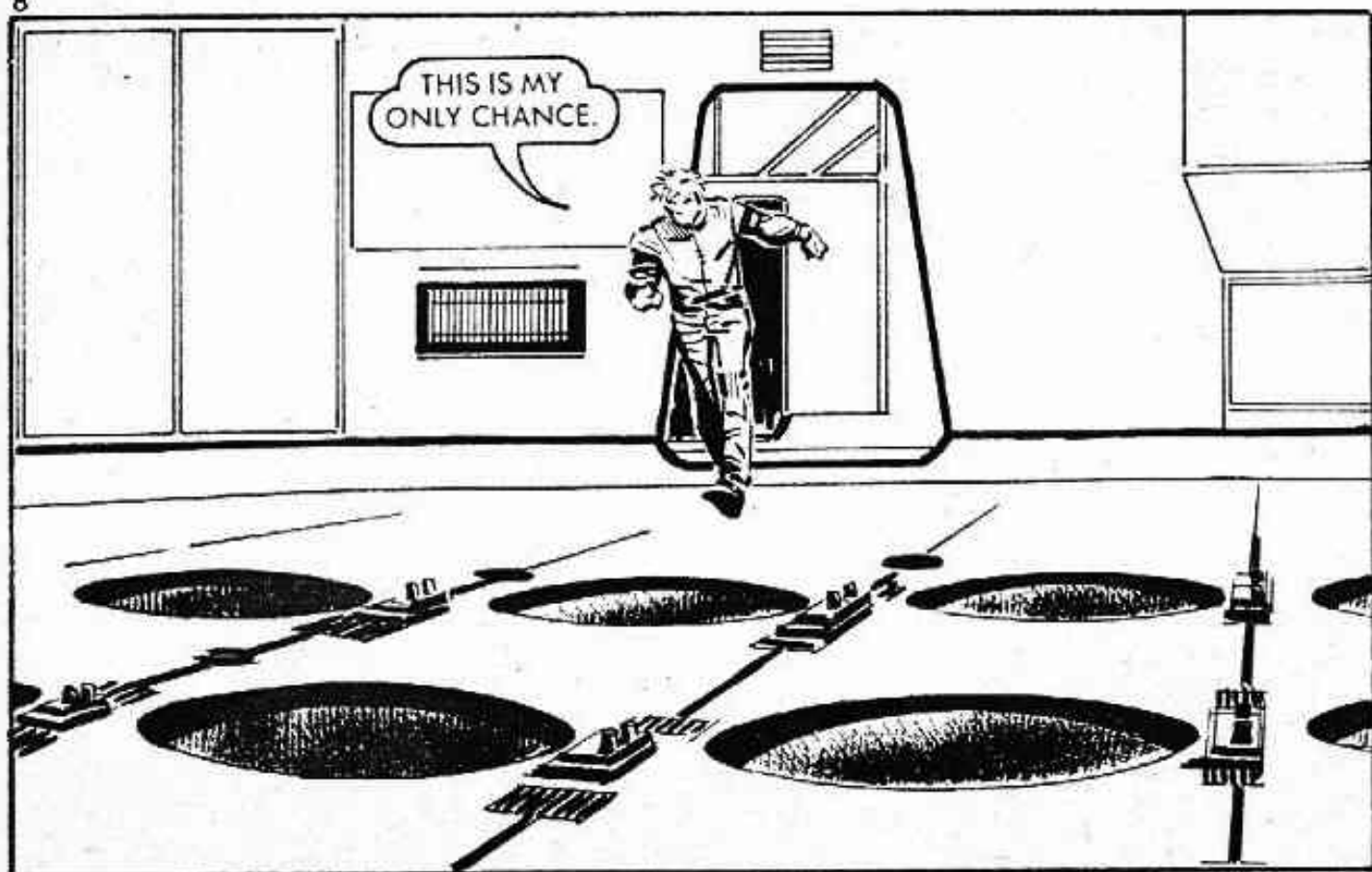
MIKE RAN OUT OF THE CHAMBER...

STOP... UGH!

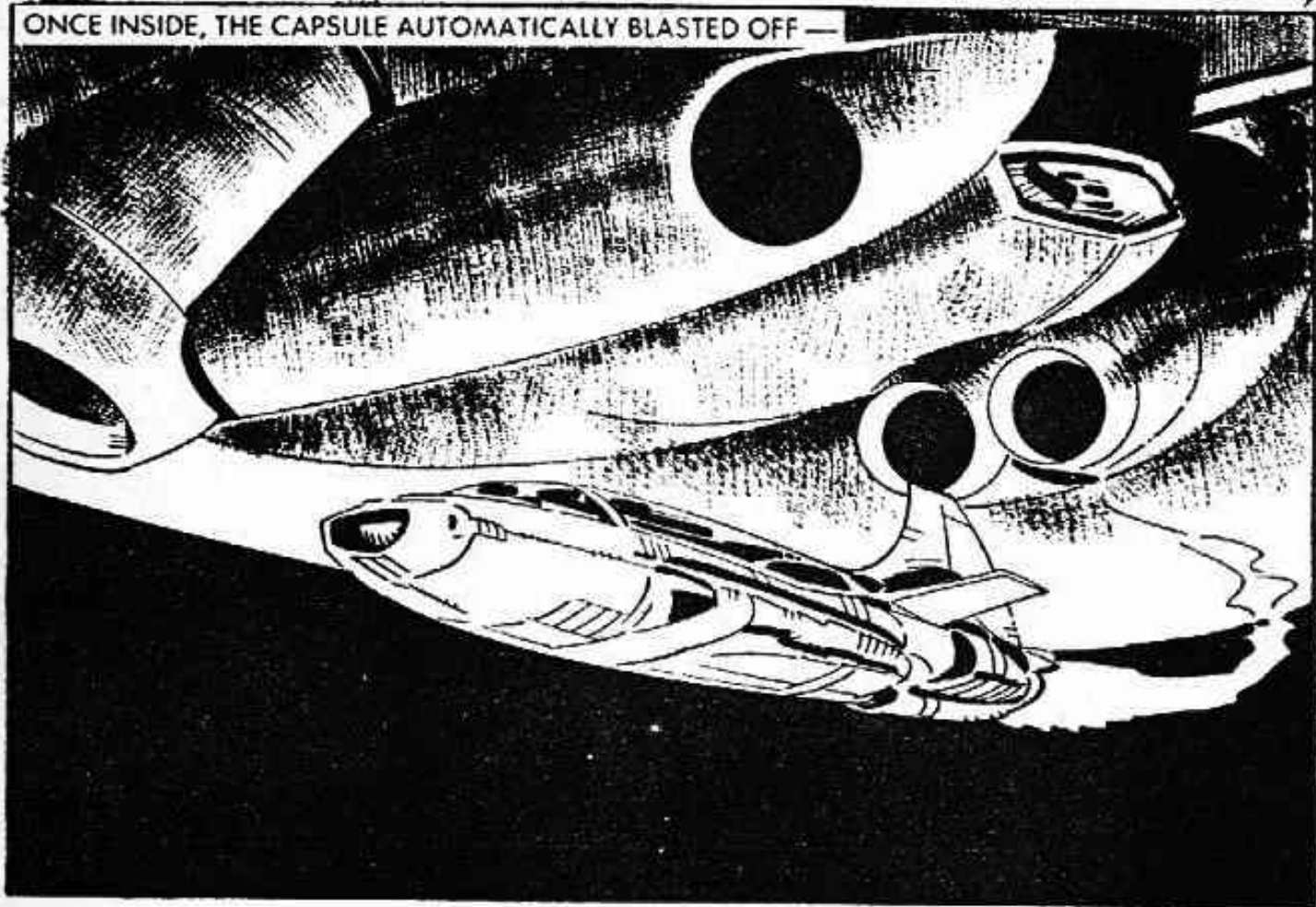
I CAN'T LET YOU STOP
ME... IT'S FOR ALL OF US!

SECURITY ALERT! CLOSE
SHUTTLE BAY IMMEDIATELY!






ONCE INSIDE, THE CAPSULE AUTOMATICALLY BLASTED OFF —





HEAVE TO, UNIDENTIFIED CRAFT. YOU DO NOT HAVE CLEARANCE TO LAND. HEAVE TO!



MIKE'S CAPSULE WARPED INTO TERRAN SPACE. EQUIPPED ONLY WITH PRIMITIVE RADIO, THE CAPSULE WAS UNABLE TO RECEIVE HYPER-SPACE MESSAGES FROM THE ORBITING DEFENCE STATION.

ON THE ORBITING DEFENCE STATION —

JUST IDENTIFIED AS A LIFE CAPSULE, SIR, TRACKED FROM THE VOYAG COLONY SHIP PASSING THROUGH THE SYSTEM. IT IS UNARMED... NO TRACE OF CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL WARFARE AGENTS... ONE MAN ON BOARD. SHALL I DESTROY IT?

NO... NOT IF IT IS UNARMED. MUST BE JUST ANOTHER VOYAG TIRED OF BEING COOPED UP. HE MAY POSE A HEALTH RISK SO PINPOINT HIS LANDING AND ALERT THE ZARDON POLICE IN CAPITAL CITY — THEY'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.

TO AVOID A HOSTILE RECEPTION, MIKE LANDED FAR FROM THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF ZARDON'S CAPITAL CITY.

IT WILL TAKE A WHILE FOR THE TERRANS TO ARRIVE... BY THEN, I'LL BE WELL AWAY FROM HERE.



MIKE GAZED IN AWE AT HIS SURROUNDINGS —

THERE'S SO MUCH SPACE...
THE AIR IS SO FRESH... MY
FIRST STEP ON A PLANET.



A POLICE UNIT SOON ARRIVED AT THE ABANDONED CAPSULE.

NO SIGN OF THE VOYAG! CARRY OUT A LIFE-FORM SCAN OVER A TWO KILOM RADIUS. HE CAN'T HAVE GOT FAR ACROSS THIS TERRAIN!



HAVING LIVED ALL HIS LIFE IN THE DENSER GRAVITY OF THE VOYAGER, MIKE'S STRENGTH AND STAMINA POWERD HIM EFFORTLESSLY TOWARDS THE CITY —



THIS IS EASY ... ZARDON'S GRAVITY IS LESS THAN VOYAGER'S!

AS NIGHT FELL —



I MUST REST UNTIL DAWN ... WATER TASTES GOOD ... I'M SAFE ENOUGH NOW ...



AS HE STRUGGLED, THE CREATURE'S GRIP TIGHTENED AND DREW HIM TO ITS HUNGRY JAWS.



MIKE DISCHARGED THE LASER PROBE
DIRECTLY INTO THE LARGE EYE.



BLINDED, THE CREATURE WITHDREW IN AGONY INTO ITS SHELL.

MIKE FOUND A QUIET SPOT TO SLEEP —

THIS LOOKS SAFE ENOUGH, BUT I'LL SET THE
INTRUDER ALARM... I WON'T BE CAUGHT
SO EASILY AGAIN!



EARLY NEXT MORNING —



USED TO THE ARTIFICIAL WORLD OF VOYAGER, MIKE HAD FAILED TO REALISE THAT THE SHALLOW VALLEY WAS AN EXPRESSWAY FOR GREAT ROBOT FREIGHTERS CARRYING RAW MATERIALS TO THE FACTORIES OF CAPITAL CITY.

THIS IS THE QUICKEST WAY TO THE CITY.



MIKE ENTERED THE CITY—

THEY ARE SUSPICIOUS. I MUST FIND SOMEWHERE TO HIDE FOR A WHILE... BUT FIRST, FOOD!



MIKE WORKED HIS WAY HUNGRILY THROUGH THE MENU, BUT WHEN PRESENTED WITH THE BILL—

YOU CAN'T FOOL ME, LAD, YOU MUST KNOW WHAT MONEY IS! PAY UP — OR ELSE...

PLEASE, I DON'T WANT TROUBLE... LET ME GO!



HE MAY BE LITTLE, SYMIE ... BUT
HE'S GOT THE STRENGTH OF TWO MEN!

HOLD HIM! I'LL TEACH THE YOUNG
BRAT A LESSON HE WON'T FORGET!

KOSMO! YOU'RE BREAKING MY ARM ... STAY
OUT OF THIS ... YOU CAN'T AFFORD TROUBLE
ON ZARDON!

LEAVE THE KID ALONE!
I'LL SETTLE HIS BILL.



FOLLOWING AN EPIDEMIC ON ANOTHER PLANET, ALL VOYAGS WERE SUSPECTED OF CARRYING TERRIBLE DISEASES. WHEN VOYAGER LEFT EARTH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, THESE DISEASES WERE CONSIDERED MILD AND INSIGNIFICANT BUT AFTER BEING TOTALLY ERADICATED FROM THE FEDERATION, TERRANS NO LONGER HAD ANY NATURAL RESISTANCE TO THEM.







ALTHOUGH WINDED, THE POLICEMAN FIRED WILDLY AS THE FUGITIVES SPURTED FOR THE STREET.



THEY RAN AS FAST AS THEY COULD THROUGH THE MAZE OF BACK ALLEYS!

SLOW DOWN! WE'VE
LOST HIM!



DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, KID?
THAT POLICEMAN SCENTED YOU
WITH HIS ELECTRO-TRUNCHEON.
YOU'RE LEAVING AN INDELIBLE
TRAIL BEHIND YOU. ROBO-
HOUNDS WILL TRACK YOU DOWN
WHEREVER YOU GO ... THERE'S
NO SAFE HIDING PLACE
ANYWHERE ON ZARDON!



EVEN AS KOSMO SPOKE, THE SHRILL, EERIE BAYING OF THE RELENTLESS ROBOHOUNDS PIERCED THE AIR.



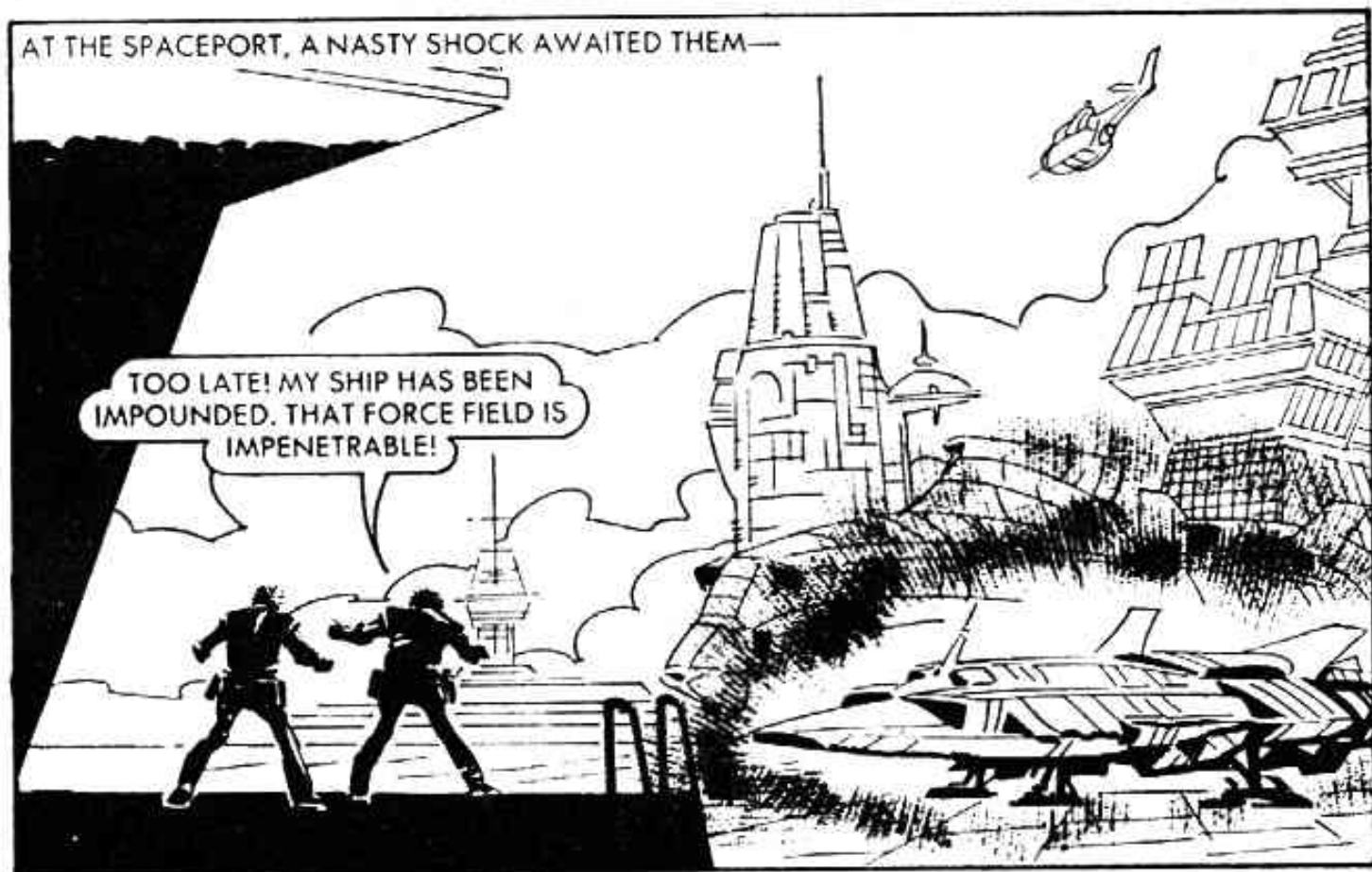
RUN FOR IT, KOSMO! SAVE YOUR OWN NECK... IT'S ME THEY'RE HUNTING!

I GOT YOU INTO THIS, KID... AND I'LL GET YOU OUT OF IT!



AT THE SPACEPORT, A NASTY SHOCK AWAITED THEM—

TOO LATE! MY SHIP HAS BEEN IMPOUNDED. THAT FORCE FIELD IS IMPENETRABLE!



AS THEY SET OFF TO BORROW A SHIP ...



KOSMO HURLED HIMSELF AT THE ROBO-HOUND.




KOSMO! WHAT'S GOING ON
... ARE YOU OK?

BLANE! I'M FINE, BUT THE KID HERE IS
SHAKEN UP. NO TIME TO EXPLAIN ... WE
NEED YOUR HELP, OLD FRIEND ...




KOSMO BLASTED OFF IN BLANE'S SHIP—



TAKE CARE OF HER, KOSMO! I'VE SPENT
A FORTUNE ON SPECIAL MODIFICATIONS
... SHE'S ALL I'VE GOT ... MY
PRIDE AND JOY ...

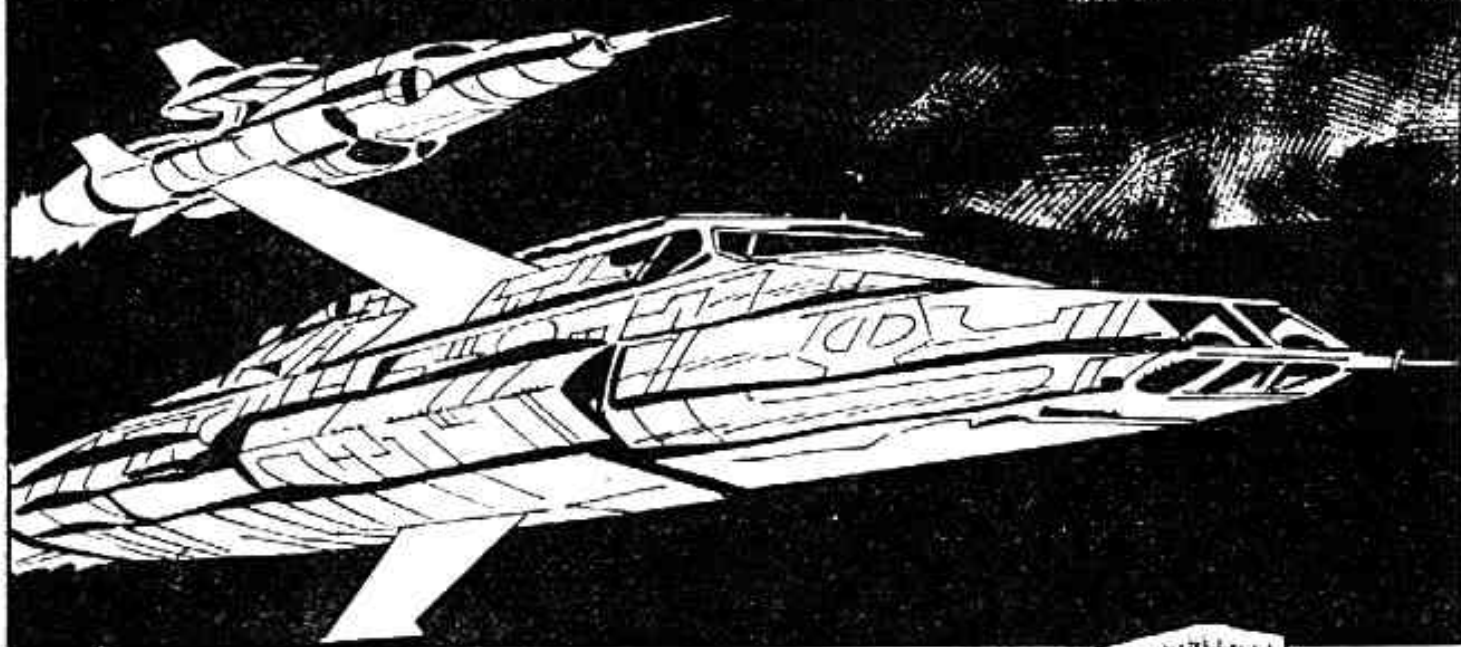
ON BOARD—



I AM LANA, THE ONBOARD COMPUTER.
THERE IS A POLICE CRUISER CLOSING
FAST ... IT SEEMS YOU HAVE
NEGLECTED TO FILE A FLIGHT PLAN WITH
SPACETRAFFIC CONTROL. I ASSUME YOU
ARE ON THE RUN ONCE MORE ... SIR!

KID, MEET LANA. SHE'S ONLY A COMPUTER,
BUT HAS A PERSONALITY ALL OF HER OWN!
NOW, OLD GIRL, LET'S SHOW THAT
CRUISER A CLEAN PAIR OF HEELS!

BLANE'S SHIP WAS FAST, BUT NOT FAST ENOUGH TO SHAKE OFF THE POLICE CRUISER WHICH HAD LOCKED ON TO IT.




LOOK OUT! THERE'S AN
ASTEROID FIELD DEAD AHEAD!

I SHARE YOUR CONCERN! SIR, IF YOU FAIL
TO EXECUTE AVOIDING MANOEUVRE
IMMEDIATELY, I WILL ASSUME
CONTROL... INCIDENTALLY, PLEASE
REFRAIN FROM CALLING ME 'OLD GIRL'...



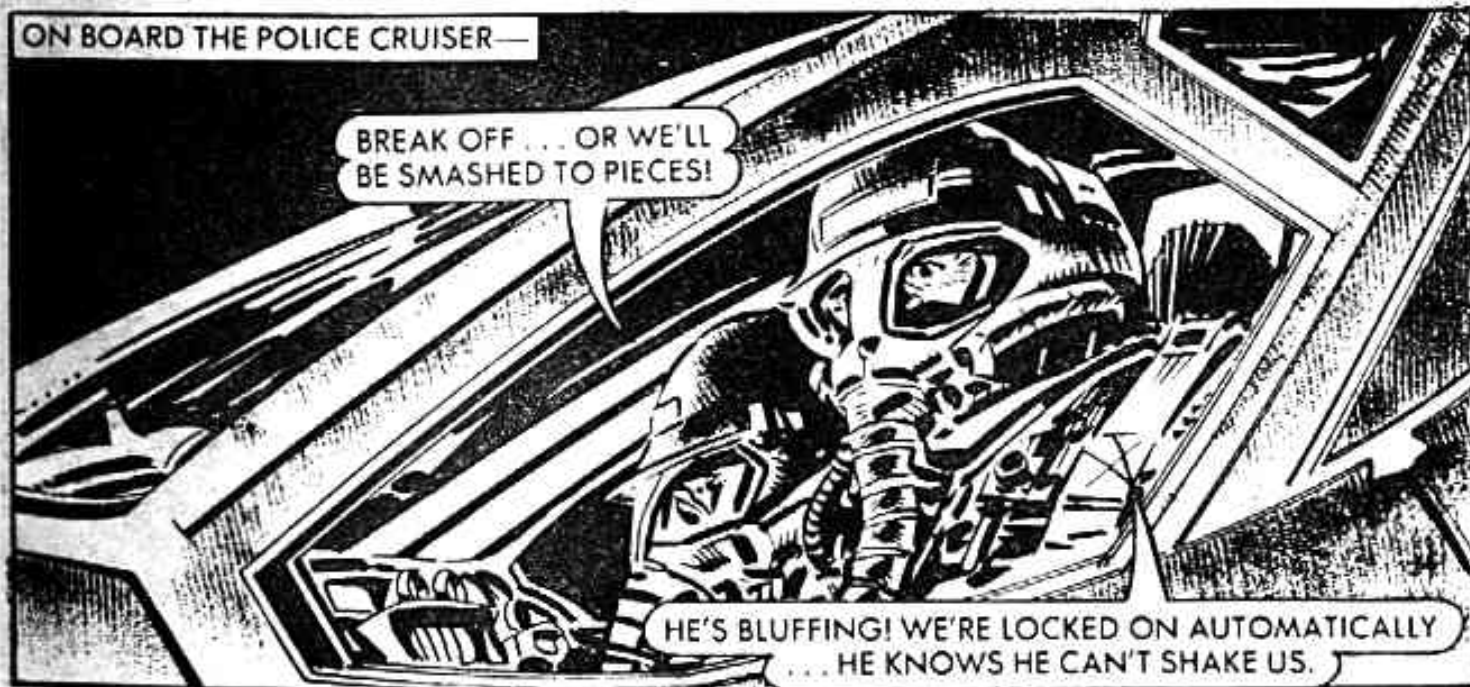
DON'T PANIC! I KNOW WHAT I'M
DOING. THE CRUISER CAN MATCH
OUR SPEED, BUT I BET HE HASN'T GOT
OUR NERVE—OR MANOEUVRABILITY!
STAND BY, OLD GIRL, INITIATE
PROGRAMME DELTA... NOW!



BUT, SIR, WE ARE SHORT OF FUEL.
PROGRAMME DELTA WILL CONSUME
MOST OF OUR RESERVES . . .

BUT, ONLY SECONDS FROM THE ASTEROID BELT,
LANA HAD NO CHOICE . . . PROGRAMME DELTA TOOK OVER,
ENTOMBING MIKE AND KOSMO IN LIFE SUSPENSION MODULES TO
PROTECT THEM FROM THE RAPID DECELERATION OF PROGRAMME DELTA.

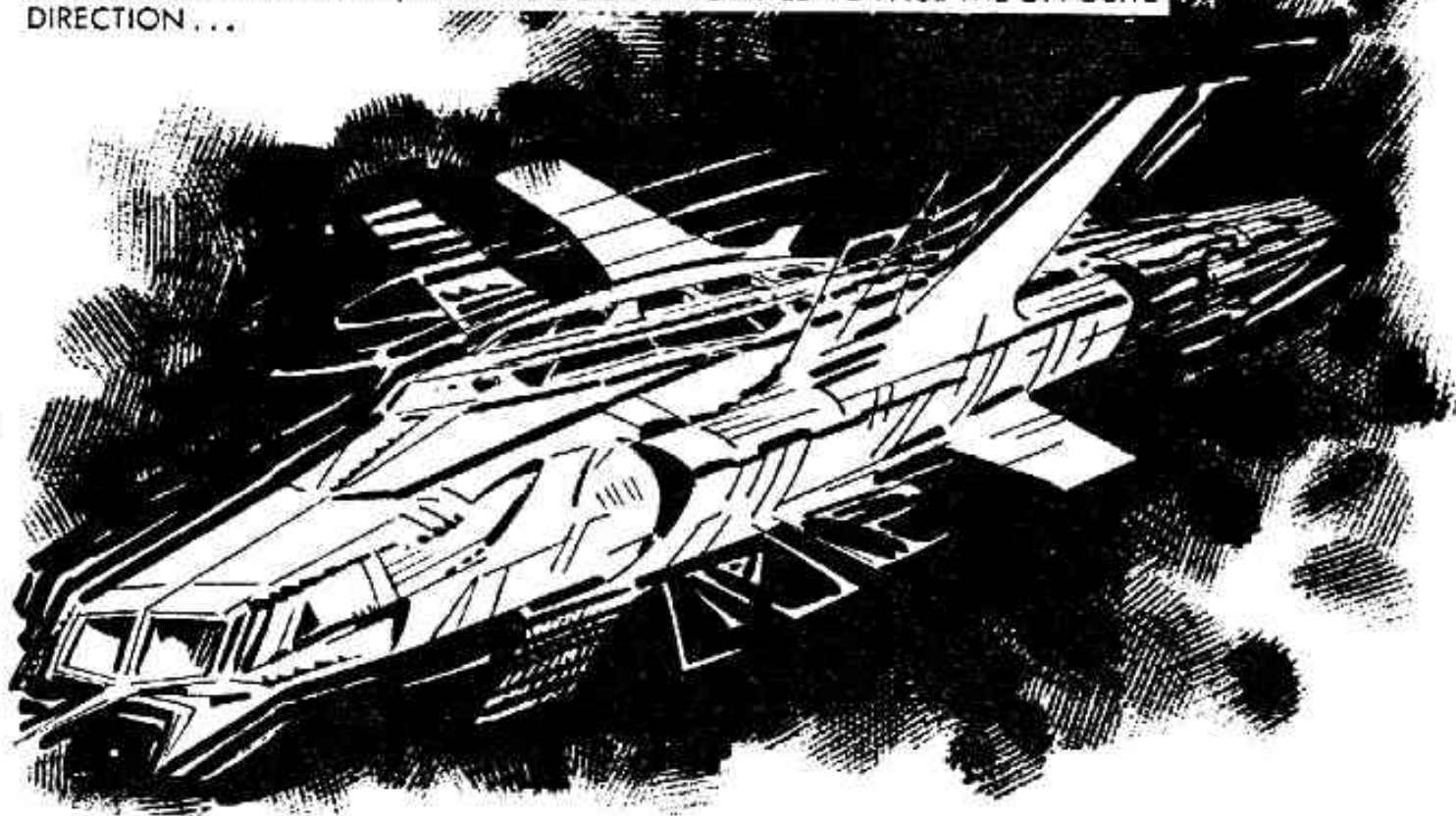
ON BOARD THE POLICE CRUISER—



BREAK OFF . . . OR WE'LL
BE SMASHED TO PIECES!

HE'S BLUFFING! WE'RE LOCKED ON AUTOMATICALLY
... HE KNOWS HE CAN'T SHAKE US.

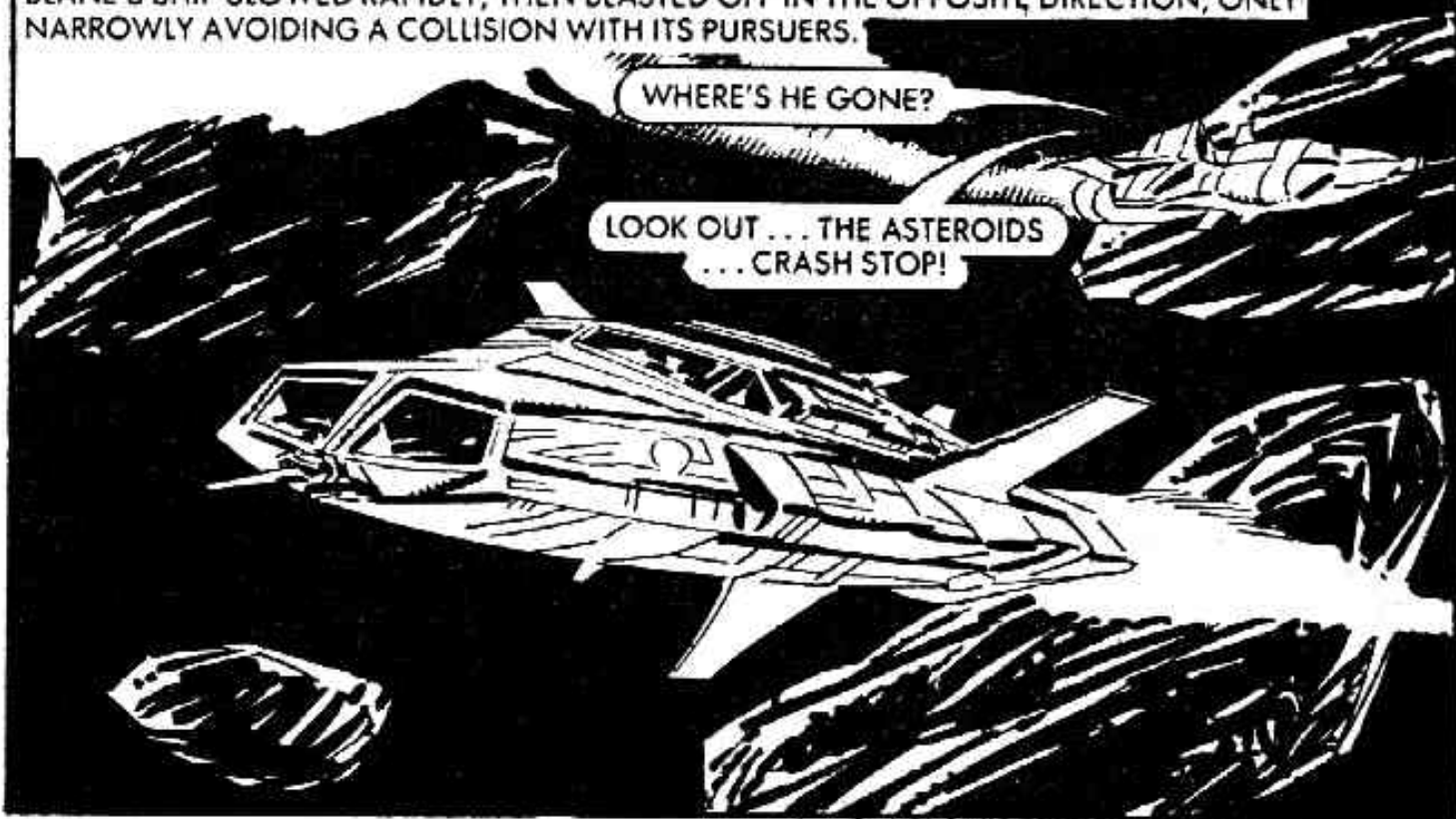
STREAMLINED PANELS RETRACTED TO REVEAL MASSIVE RETROS IN THE NOSE OF BLANE'S SPECIALLY MODIFIED SHIP, AND THE COCKPIT ROTATED TO FACE THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION...



BLANE'S SHIP SLOWED RAPIDLY, THEN BLASTED OFF IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, ONLY NARROWLY AVOIDING A COLLISION WITH ITS PURSUERS.

WHERE'S HE GONE?

LOOK OUT... THE ASTEROIDS
... CRASH STOP!



WHILE THE POLICE CRUISER PICKED ITS WAY THROUGH THE DENSE FIELD OF JAGGED ROCKS, MIKE AND KOSMO SPED OFF IN SEARCH OF A PLACE TO HIDE. BLANE'S SHIP HAD BEEN LOW ON FUEL WHEN THEY LEFT ZARDON IN A HURRY, AND THE VIOLENT MANOEUVRE HAD USED UP MOST OF IT.

MY PEOPLE WILL BE LANDING THERE SOON. I LEFT MY PEOPLE TO FIND HELP, BUT I THINK THEY WILL HELP US.

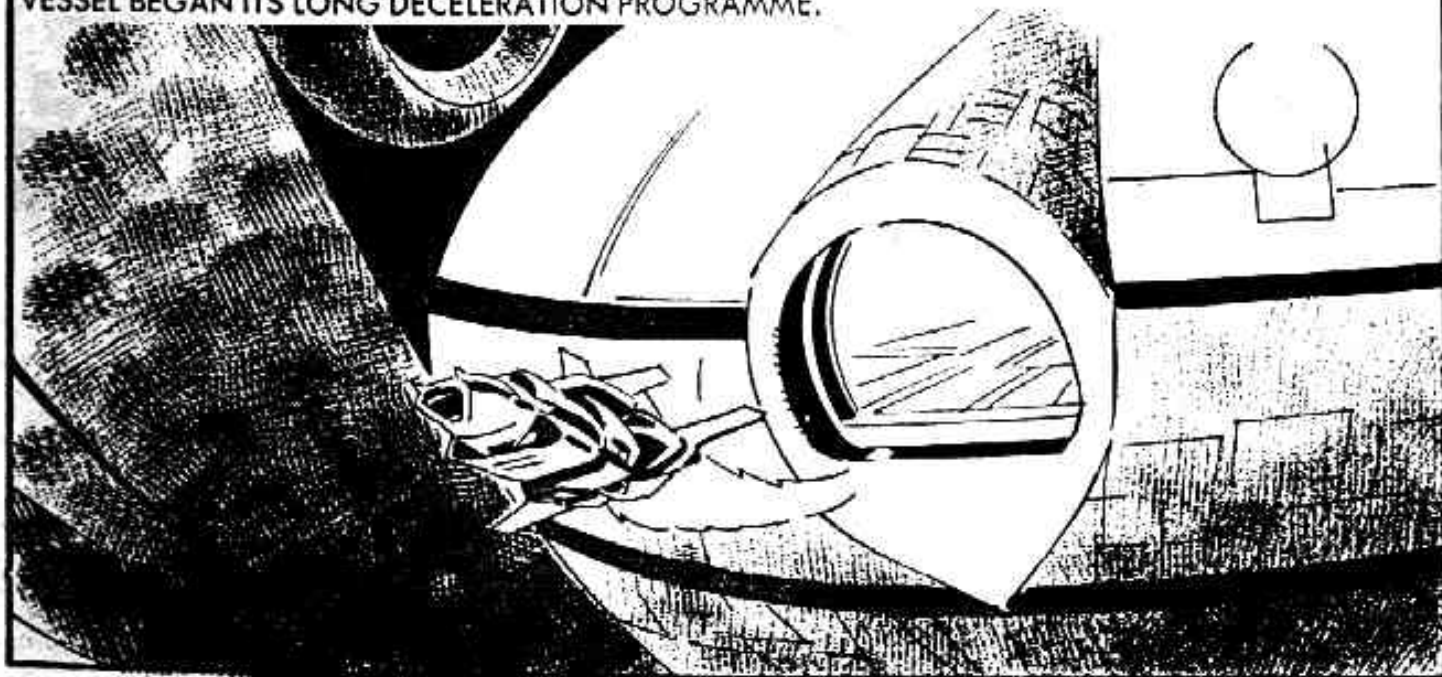
THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE WITHIN RANGE THE POLICE WILL NEVER THINK OF LOOKING... PLANET MX-7. I'LL SEND BLANE A CODED MESSAGE TO FERRY OUT SOME FUEL WHEN THINGS HAVE COOLED DOWN.

TELL ME, KOSMO, WHY DID YOU HELP ME BACK THERE ON ZARDON?

I NEEDED A PARTNER AND YOU LOOKED AS IF YOU NEED A JOB!

WHAT HE MEANS, KID, IS THAT HE'S A COMMON SMUGGLER!

MEANWHILE, A SHUTTLECRAFT WAS LAUNCHED FROM VOYAGER 124 AS THE COLOSSAL VESSEL BEGAN ITS LONG DECELERATION PROGRAMME.



THE TWO COUNCILLORS ON BOARD SOON HAD TO DECIDE THE FATE OF THE WHOLE COLONY—

WE HAVE JUST A FEW HOURS TO REACH
MX-7 AND MAKE A THOROUGH
INVESTIGATION, BEFORE GIVING
VOYAGER THE INSTRUCTION TO
COMPLETE ITS DECELERATION
PROGRAMME READY FOR LANDING...

YES, JON, BUT ONLY IF THE PLANET IS A
GOOD PLACE FOR OUR PEOPLE TO SETTLE.
IF NOT, VOYAGER MUST CONTINUE TO
THE NEXT STAR SYSTEM!



THE SHUTTLE SWEEPED LOW OVER HOSTILE TERRAIN...



VIOLENT STORMS RAGED CONTINUOUSLY OVER VAST SEAS . . .



THEY EVENTUALLY FOUND A LANDING SPOT IN THE PLANET'S NARROW, CALM, TEMPERATE ZONE.

THE ATMOSPHERE IS THIN . . . AND
HARSH . . . ONLY JUST BREATHABLE!

WE WILL SOON ADJUST TO IT, AND OUR
DESCENDANTS WILL HAVE NO TROUBLE AT ALL.
WE MUST THINK OF THEM!





WITH LITTLE TIME LEFT TO SIGNAL THE APPROACHING VOYAGERS, THE COUNCILLORS ARGUED.

THIS PLANET IS HELL! HOW CAN WE SURVIVE AGAINST SUCH CREATURES? WE MUST CONTINUE OUR SEARCH IN THE NEXT STAR SYSTEM... EVEN IF IT MEANS ENTERING KRAL TERRITORY.

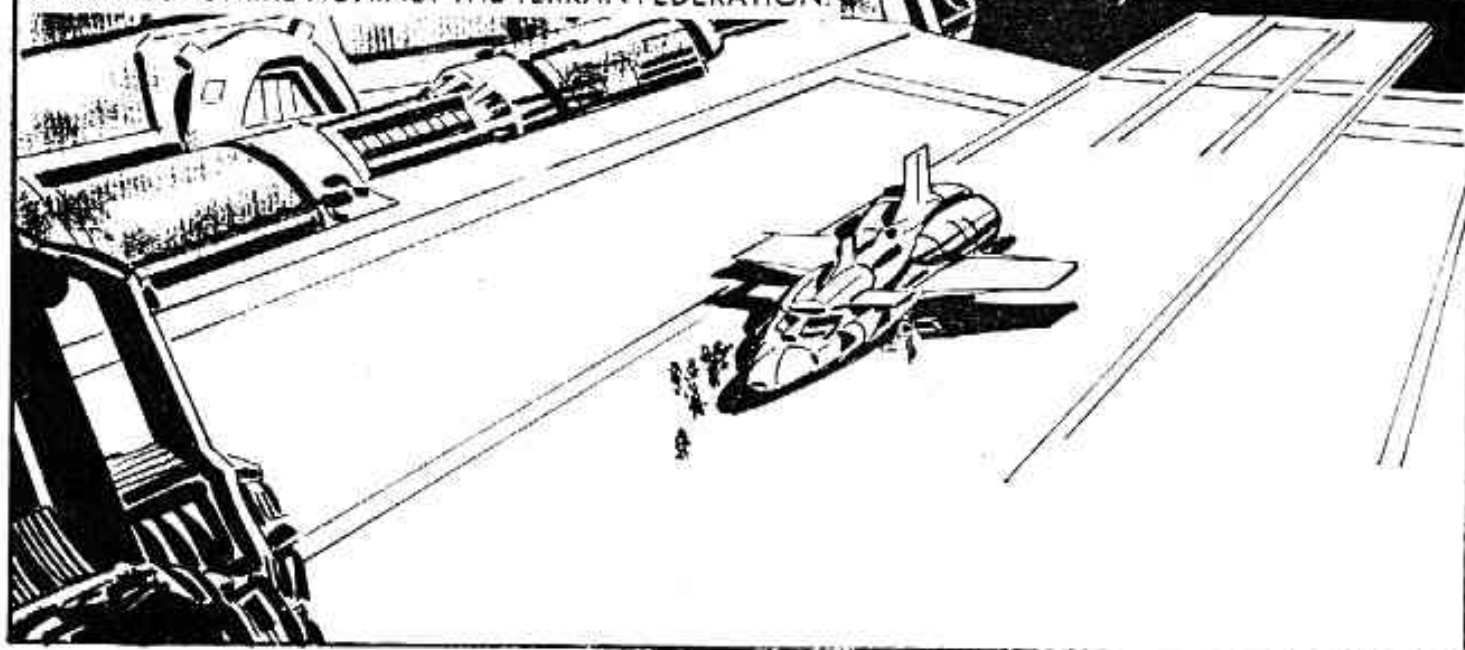
NO! WE CAN SURVIVE IN THIS ZONE AND GRADUALLY EXEND OUR LIVING SPACE AS WE LEARN TO CULTIVATE THE SOIL AND HARNESS THE NATURAL FORCES TO WORK FOR US. I WILL GIVE THE COMMAND... VOYAGER MUST LAND!

UNSEEN A GIANT KRAL HAD APPROACHED—

YOUR COLONY VESSEL WILL NOT LAND... I NEED IT, AND YOU SHALL TAKE ME TO IT IN YOUR SHUTTLE.



ONCE THE SHUTTLE RETURNED THE ALIEN EXPLAINED THAT SAFE FROM DETECTION BY TERRAN SPACE PATROLS, A CRACK UNIT OF KRAL COMMANDOS HAD WAITED PATIENTLY ON MX-7 FOR THE ARRIVAL OF VOYAGER'S ADVANCE PARTY. FOR MONTHS THEY HAD MONITORED THE COLONY'S PROGRESS AND NOW PLANNED TO USE THE COLONY SHIP IN THEIR FIRST STRIKE AGAINST THE TERRAN FEDERATION.



THE KRAL SEIZED CONTROL OF VOYAGERS—



ON THE BRIDGE, VOTH, THE KRAL LEADER, QUICKLY FAMILIARISED HIMSELF WITH THE OPERATION AND CONTROLS OF THE GREAT VESSEL.

I DEMAND TO KNOW WHAT YOU WANT!

YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO DEMAND ANYTHING. YOU WILL DO AS I SAY, OR I WILL EXECUTE YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE — ONE BY ONE!

SET A COURSE FOR ZARDON! WE HAVE A TRAP TO SPRING!

MEANWHILE, ABOVE PLANET MX-7 ...

I DETECT METAL OBJECTS IN THE NARROW TEMPERATE ZONE. THE SIGNAL IS WEAK, POSSIBLY DUE TO ELECTRONIC CAMOUFLAGE.

IT MUST BE VOYAGER ... WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE? THEY'VE LANDED! AT LAST ... I'M HOME!

NOT QUITE, KID! WE'RE OUT OF FUEL ... BRACE YOURSELF FOR A CRASH LANDING!

KOSMO TRIED TO LAND CLOSE TO WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS VOYAGER.



THE CRAFT WAS BADLY DAMAGED—

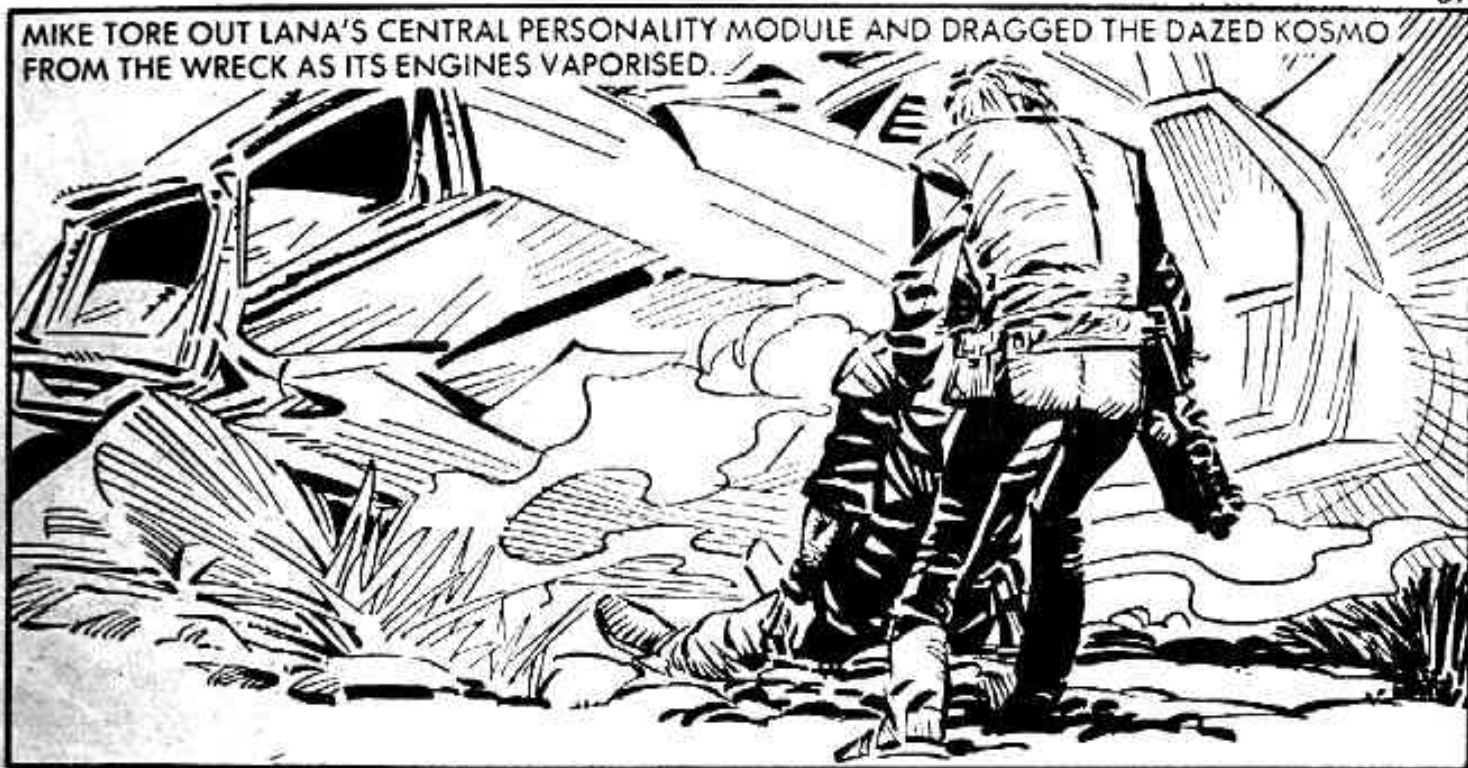
COME ON, KOSMO! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT BEFORE IT EXPLODES!

... I PROMISED TO TAKE CARE OF HIS SHIP ... BLANE WILL NEVER FORGIVE ME.

... DON'T LEAVE ME, KID ... SAVE ME, TOO!



MIKE TORE OUT LANA'S CENTRAL PERSONALITY MODULE AND DRAGGED THE DAZED KOSMO FROM THE WRECK AS ITS ENGINES VAPORISED.



I CAN HARDLY BREATHE IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, KID ... I NEED MORE OXYGEN ...

LANA CAN POINT US IN THE DIRECTION OF THE METAL OBJECTS SHE DETECTED.

METAL OBJECTS? I'M SORRY, KID ... I REMEMBER YOU AND KOSMO, BUT YOU LEFT MY MAIN MEMORY STORE IN THE SHIP ... ALONG WITH MY SENSORY INPUTS. I CAN HEAR YOU, BUT THAT'S ALL—I'M TOTALLY BLIND. FROM NOW ON, YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN!





THE FIGHTER LANDED —





MIKE STROLLED BOLDLY UP TO THE ASTONISHED KRALS—





DISTRACTED BY LANA'S VOICE, THE KRAL FELL INTO MIKE'S TRAP—





THE FIGHTER'S FLIGHT CONTROLS
WERE SIMPLE—

WHAT CAN THE KRAL WANT WITH A
PRIMITIVE CRAFT LIKE VOYAGER?
LET'S TRY TO FIND THE ANSWER.

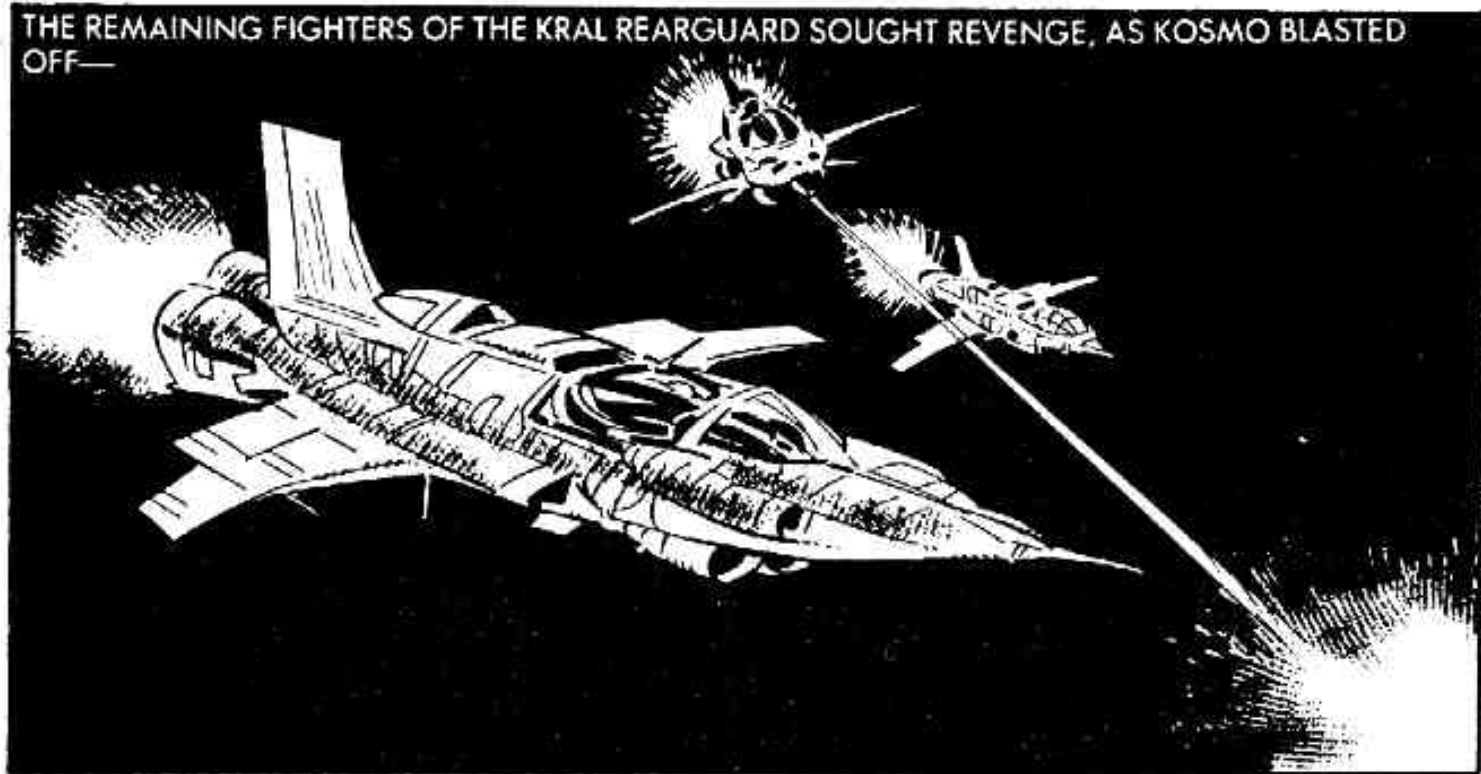


SUDDENLY, A BLINDING FLASH FILLED THE
COCKPIT AND THE SMALL FIGHTER SHOOK
VIOLENTLY.

WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!



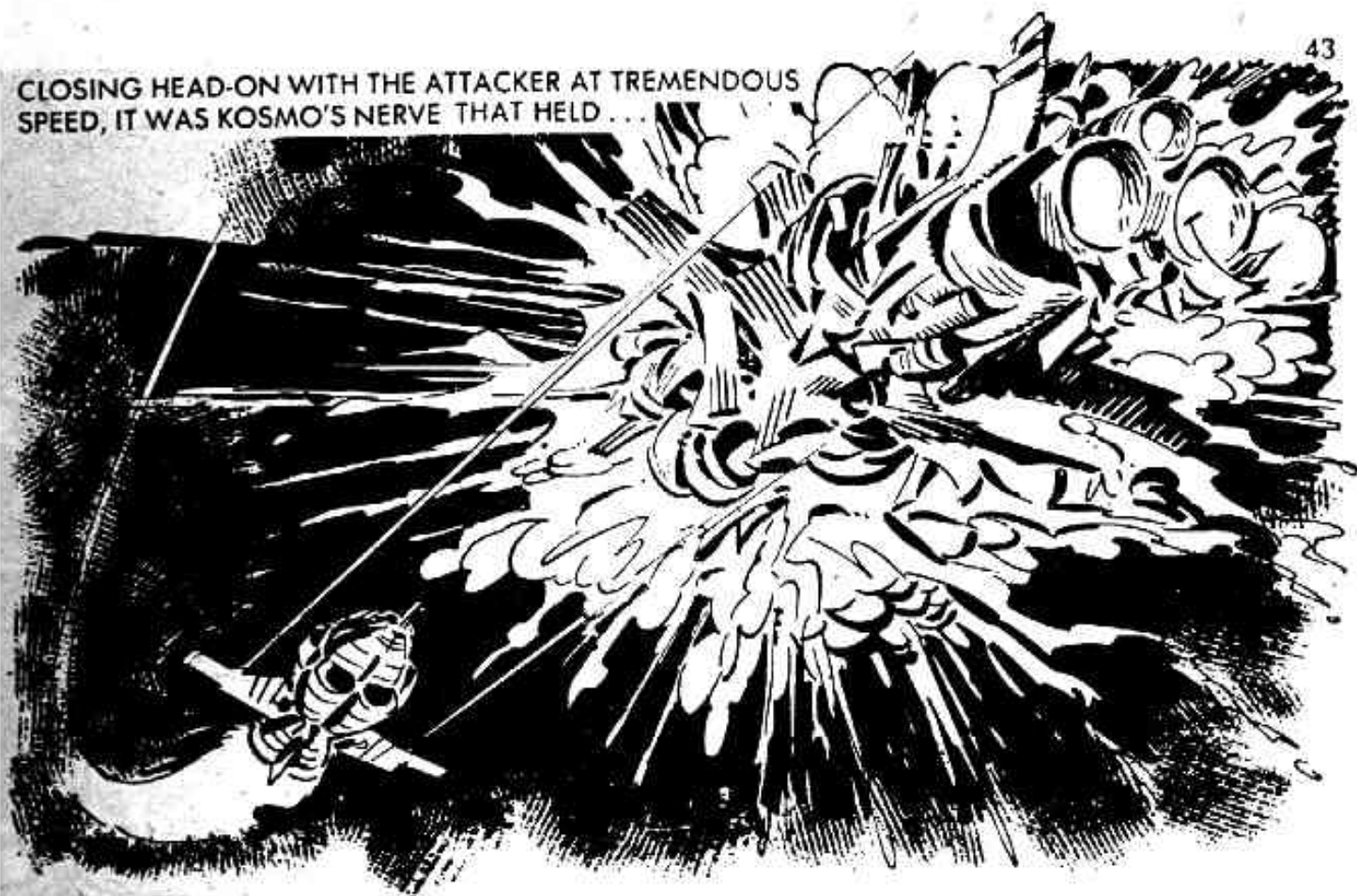
THE REMAINING FIGHTERS OF THE KRAL REARGUARD SOUGHT REVENGE, AS KOSMO BLASTED OFF—



BUT KOSMO WAS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR ANY KRAL PILOT . . .



CLOSING HEAD-ON WITH THE ATTACKER AT TREMENDOUS SPEED, IT WAS KOSMO'S NERVE THAT HELD . . .



GET INTO ONE OF THE KRAL SPACESUITS STOWED BEHIND THE SEATS. THAT FIRST BOLT SERIOUSLY DAMAGED OUR LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM—IT'S JUST PACKED UP!



THE KRAL FIGHTER WAS SMALL BUT EXTREMELY FAST. VOYAGER SOON CAME WITHIN RANGE.

THERE SHE IS! I'LL PUT
UP OUR DEFENCE SHIELDS.

THERE'S NO NEED FOR SHIELDS. VOYAGER
CARRIES NO OFFENSIVE WEAPONRY ...

BUT—

WHAT THE...?



ENVELOPED IN PERSONAL PROTECTIVE FORCE FIELDS, MIKE AND KOSMO WERE EJECTED AUTOMATICALLY IN STEERABLE SURVIVAL SEATS.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID VOYAGER WAS UNARMED!

I FORGOT ABOUT THE ANTI-METEORITE CANNON!



VOYAGER LACKED SOPHISTICATED DETECTION EQUIPMENT, AND THE SURVIVAL SEATS WERE LOST AMONG THE FLYING DEBRIS. MIKE LED KOSMO TO A REMOTE PART OF THE IMMENSE SHIP.

WE CAN ENTER THROUGH THIS INSPECTION HATCH.

BUT BE PREPARED FOR TROUBLE!



THEY MADE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE GREAT HYDROPONIC SPHERES TOWARDS THE BRIDGE.

THIS IS OUR FARM. WE GROW ALL OUR FRESH FOOD HERE. THE NEXT SPHERE ALONG CONTAINS SOME OF OUR LIVING QUARTERS...

BUT VOTH WAS KEEPING A CLOSE WATCH ON THE INTERNAL SECURITY MONITORS.

THE TERRAN AND THE VOYAG HAVE SURVIVED... HOW DID THEY GET ABOARD? DESPATCH GUARDS TO DEAL WITH THEM! NO, WAIT... I HAVE A BETTER IDEA!





AS THE DOOR SLAMMED SHUT, THE SOUND OF RUSHING AIR ECHOED THROUGH THE SPHERE -

THEY MUST HAVE SPOTTED US ON THE MONITORS ... THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE! ALL THE EXITS FROM THE SPHERE HAVE BEEN SEALED FROM THE BRIDGE ... AND THE AIR IS BEING DRAWN OUT! WE'LL SUFFOCATE!

QUICK! PUT ON YOUR HELMET ... WE HAVE SOME OXYGEN LEFT! IS THERE ANOTHER WAY OUT?

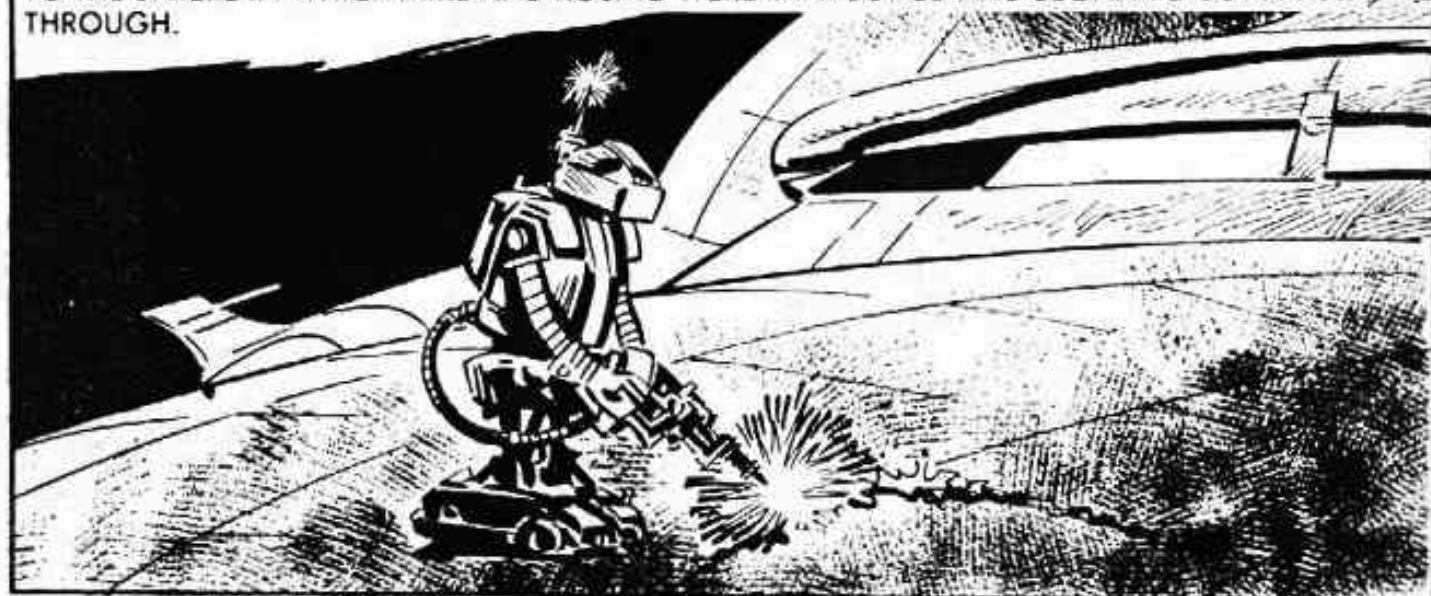


WITH ALL THE DOORS AND HATCHES SEALED, THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY OUT OF THE SPHERE.

JOJO ... THIS IS AN EMERGENCY ... RESPOND IMMEDIATELY ...



THE OBEDIENT MAINTENANCE ROBOT AMBLED CAREFULLY ALONG THE OUTSIDE OF VOYAGER TO THE SPHERE IN WHICH MIKE AND KOSMO WERE IMPRISONED AND BEGAN TO CUT A WAY THROUGH.



ON THE BRIDGE, VOTH WAS READY TO SPRING HIS PAINSTAKINGLY PREPARED TRAP—



BY THREATENING TO EXECUTE VOYAGE, VOTH FORCED JON TO SEND A FALSE DISTRESS SIGNAL.

VOYAGER'S NEW COURSE HAD TAKEN IT INTO THE PATROL AREA OF THE POWERFUL TERRAN BATTLECRUISER 'STARFIRE'.



AS STARFIRE RACED TO INTERCEPT VOYAGER, MIKE AND KOSMO, FREED BY JOJO, ENCOUNTERED KRALS BUSY ON THE OUTSIDE OF ONE OF THE SPHERES.



HUDDLED INSIDE WERE VOYAGS CHOSEN BY VOTH FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT.



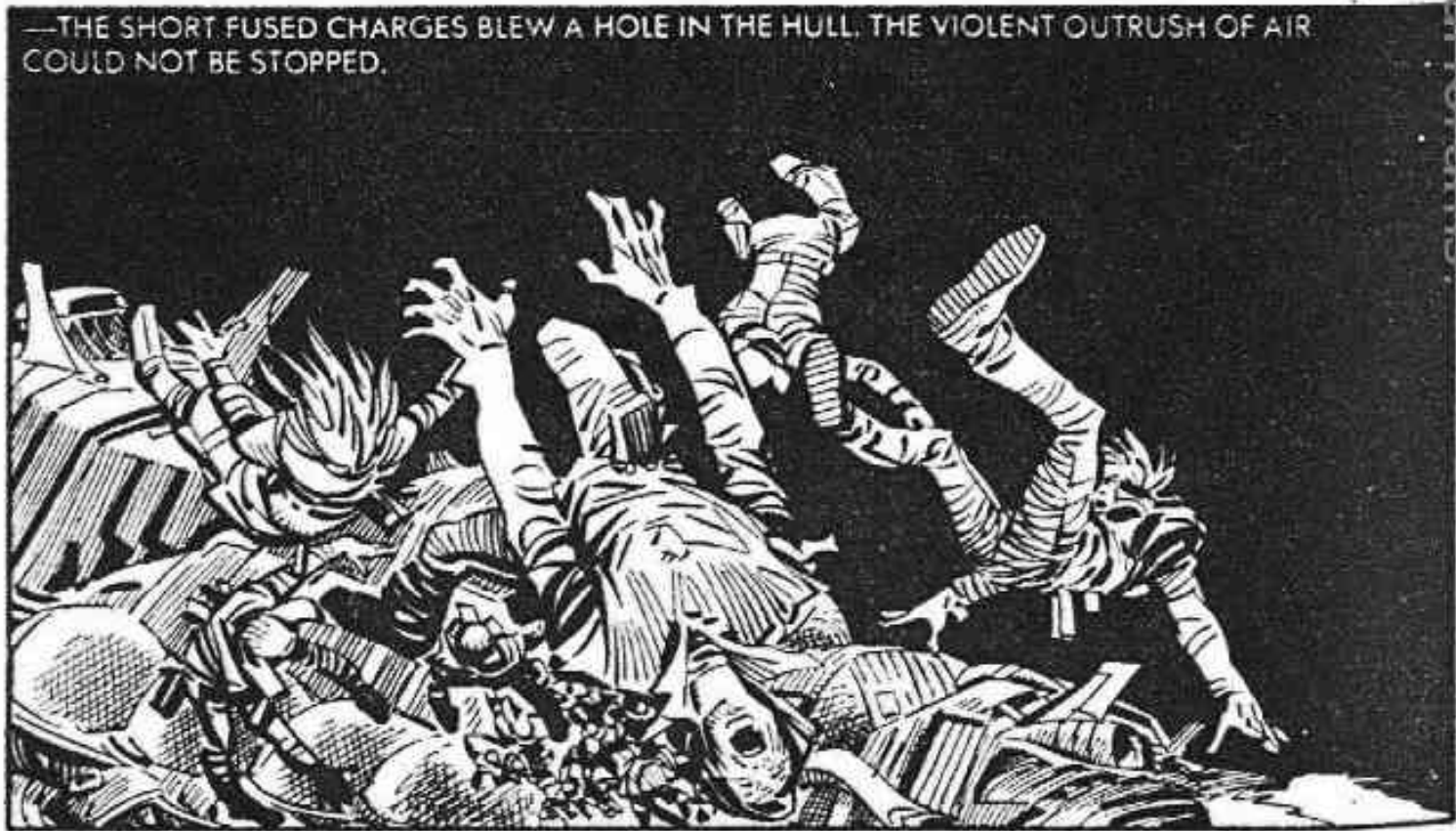
MIKE! LOOK OUT ...
BEHIND YOU!



THEY STRUGGLED TO REMOVE THE EXPLOSIVE CHARGES, BUT —



—THE SHORT FUSED CHARGES BLEW A HOLE IN THE HULL. THE VIOLENT OUTRUSH OF AIR COULD NOT BE STOPPED.



AS STARFIRE APPROACHED THE STRICKEN VOYAGER, ITS CAPTAIN REACTED TO THE HORRIFIC SIGHT.

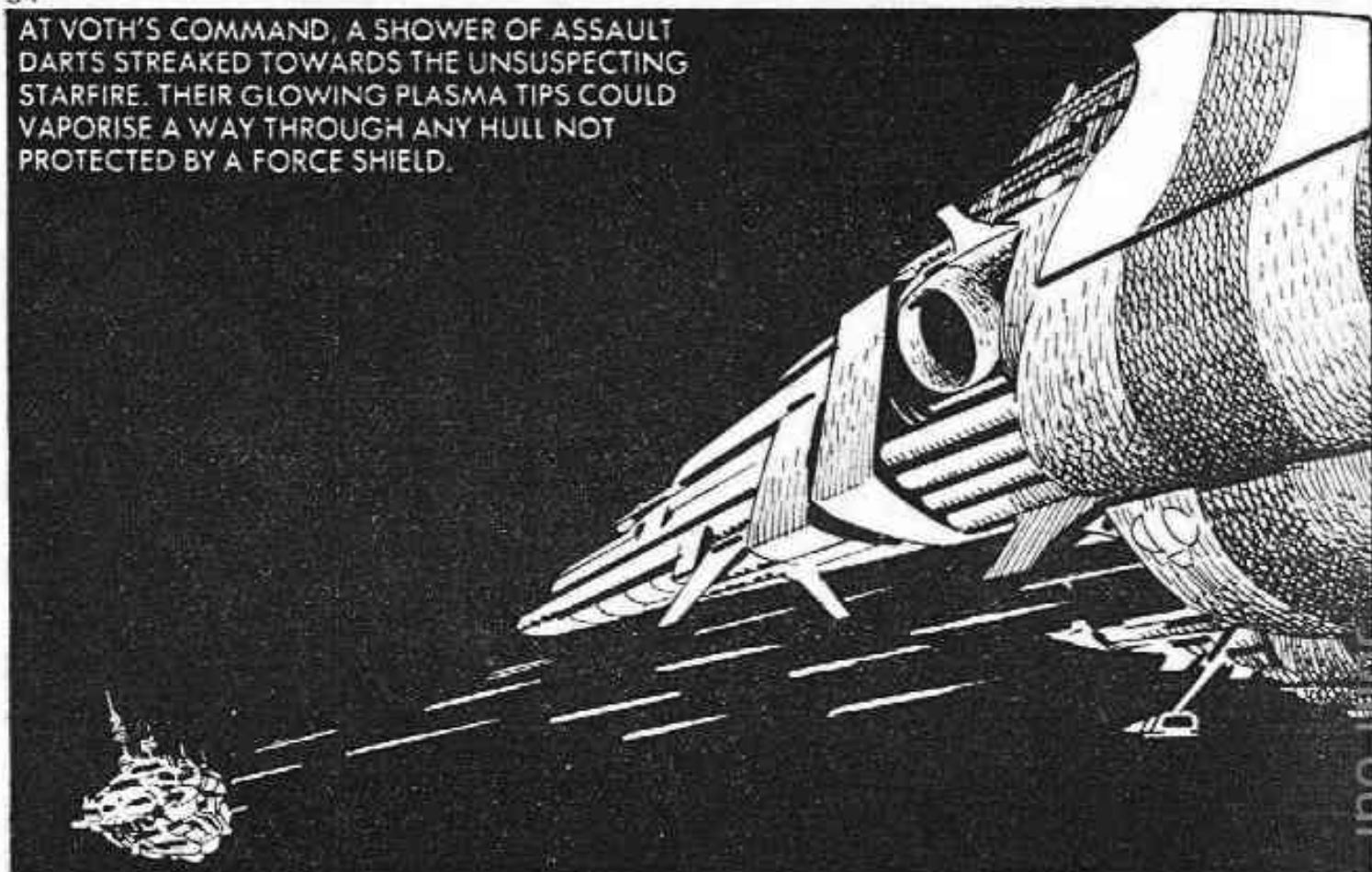
LOWER THE SHIELDS! GET THE SURVIVORS ABOARD BEFORE THE WHOLE SHIP DISINTEGRATES!



THE TERRAN HAS LOWERED HIS SHIELDS, AS I KNEW HE WOULD! IT WILL BE THE LAST MISTAKE HE EVER MAKES. THE TIME HAS COME—ATTACK! ATTACK!



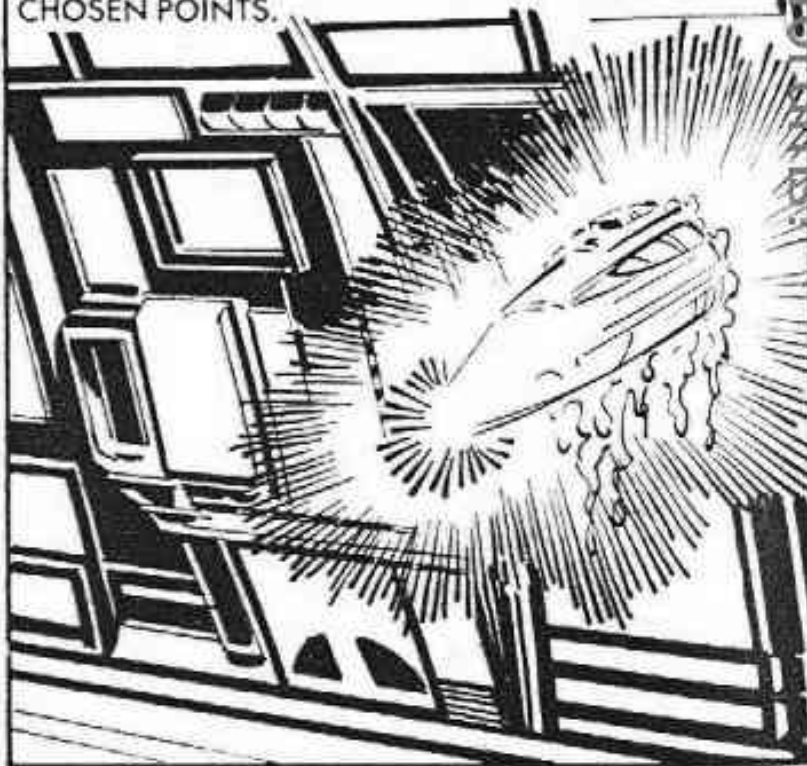
AT VOTH'S COMMAND, A SHOWER OF ASSAULT DARTS STREAKED TOWARDS THE UNSUSPECTING STARFIRE. THEIR GLOWING PLASMA TIPS COULD VAPORISE A WAY THROUGH ANY HULL NOT PROTECTED BY A FORCE SHIELD.



KRAL ASSAULT DARTS! ACTIVATE SHIELDS—IT'S A TRAP!



BUT THE ORDER WAS TOO LATE. THE SWIFT DARTS PENETRATED STARFIRE'S HULL AT CAREFULLY CHOSEN POINTS.



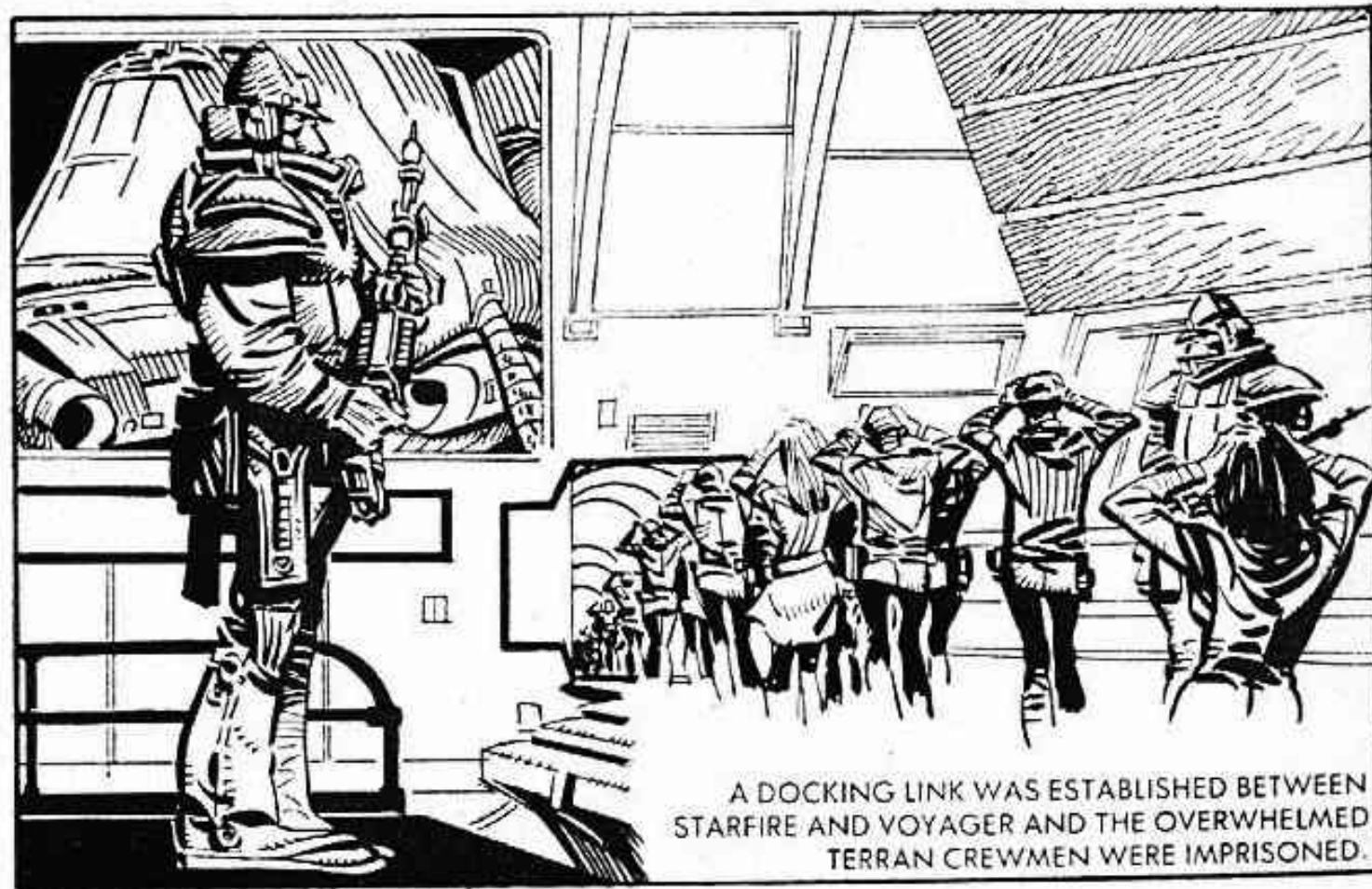
FUSING WITH THE METAL OF THE HULL, THE DARTS SEALED THE HOLES THEY HAD PUNCHED TO PREVENT LOSS OF AIR AND PRESSURE INSIDE STARFIRE. HEAVILY ARMED COMMANDOS STORMED FROM CROCODILE-LIKE JAWS.



DARTS PENETRATED DEEP INTO KEY AREAS OF THE BATTLECRUISER, AND THE MAIN COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE WAS KNOCKED OUT BEFORE THE SURPRISED TERRANS COULD ALERT THEIR H.Q. ON ZARDON.

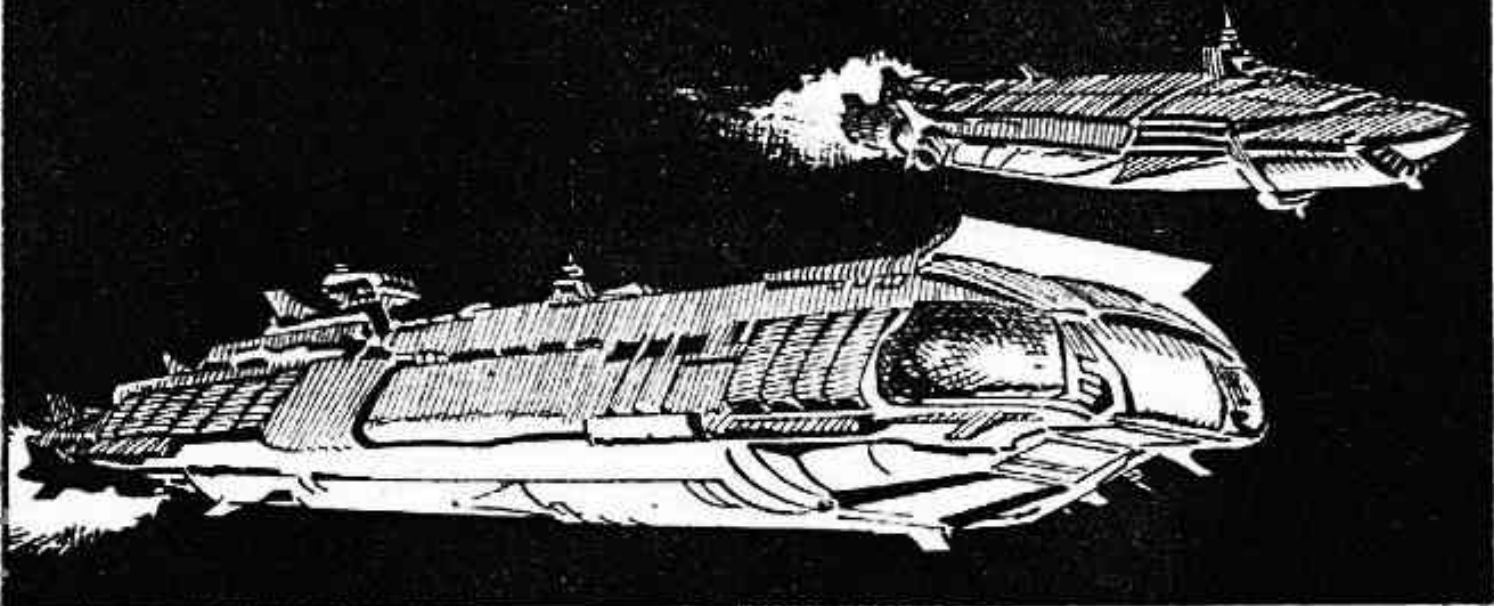


STARFIRE'S ARMOURY WAS ALSO SEIZED, AND ALTHOUGH THEY FOUGHT BRAVELY, THE TERRANS STOOD NO CHANCE AGAINST DEADLY KRAL FIREPOWER.



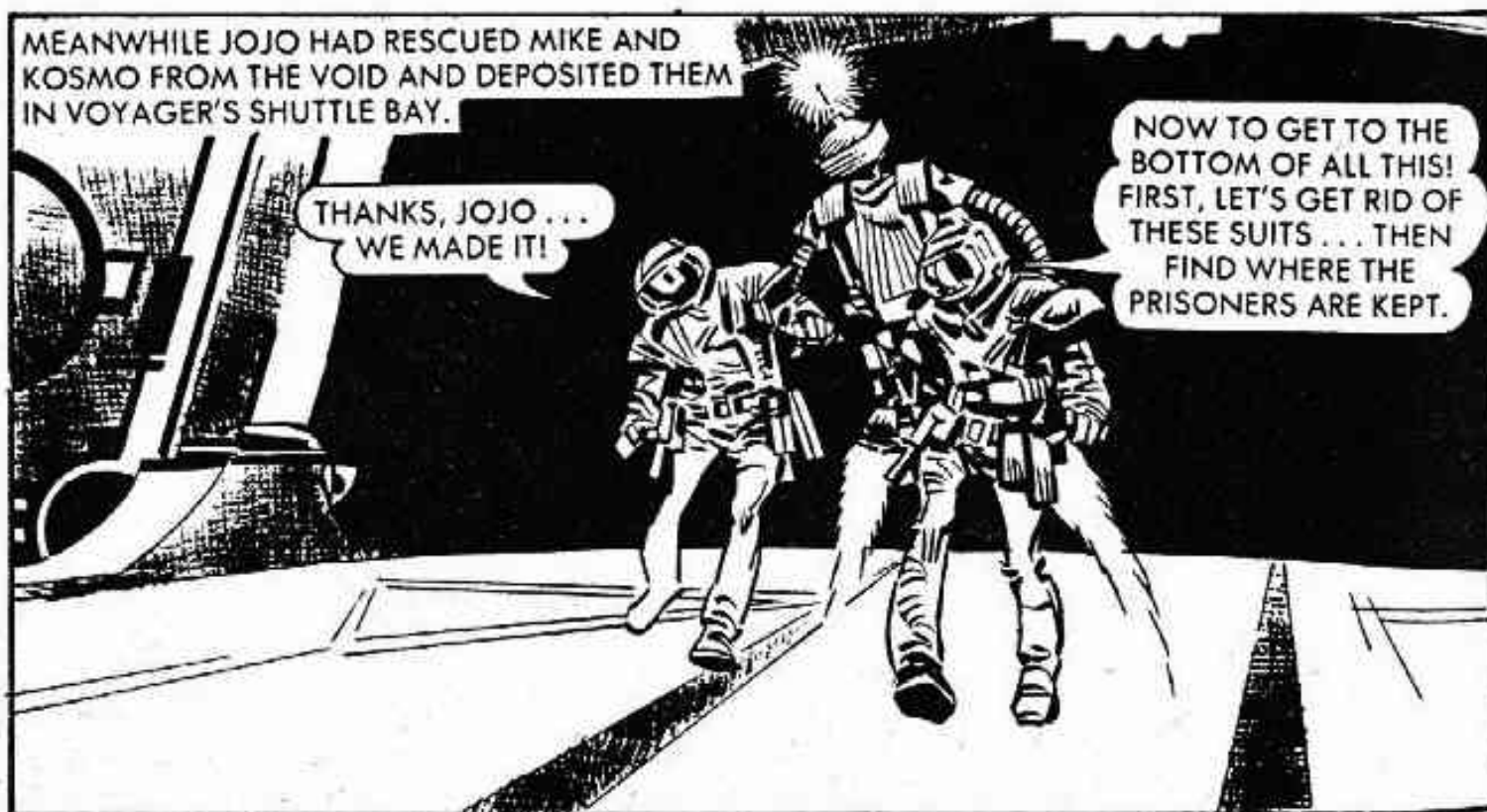
A DOCKING LINK WAS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN STARFIRE AND VOYAGER AND THE OVERWHELMED TERRAN CREWMEN WERE IMPRISONED.

ONCE THE COMMANDOS HAD DONE THEIR JOB, KRAL
TRANSPORTS DISGUISED AS INNOCENT COMMERCIAL
FREIGHTERS MADE THEIR RENDEZVOUS WITH VOYAGER



HEAVILY ARMED ASSAULT BATTALIONS WERE TRANSFERRED FROM FREIGHTERS AND PACKED
INTO STARFIRE.





AS THEY ENTERED—

IT'S JON—MY BROTHER!

THAT'S THE PLACE.
LET'S GO!



GET THEM, MIKE!



INSIDE THE CROWDED SPHERE, THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF ILL-FEELING BETWEEN THE IMPRISONED VOYAGS AND TERRANS.

YOU ARE TO BLAME FOR THIS, VOYAG! WHY
DID YOU CO-OPERATE WITH THE KRALES?



I HAD NO CHOICE! VOTH WOULD
HAVE EXECUTED MY PEOPLE. I TRIED
TO BUY TIME.

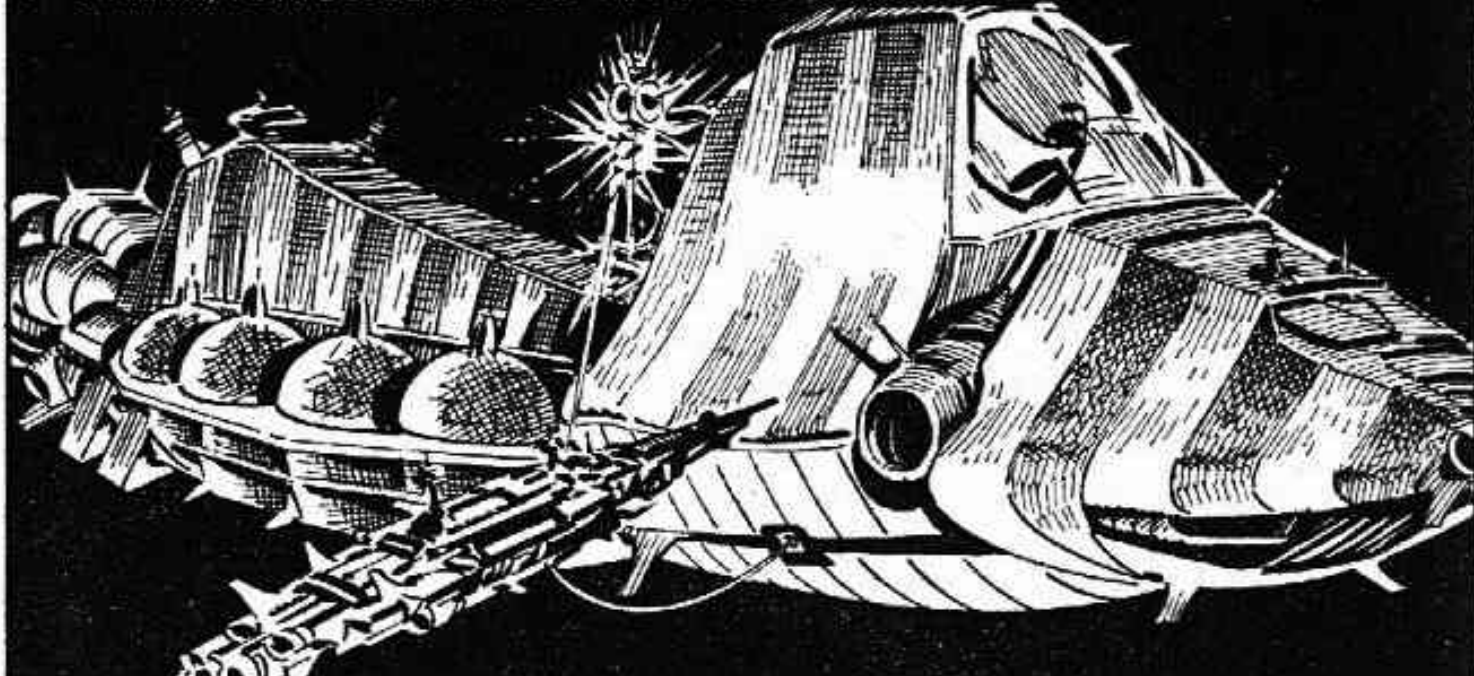




MANY VOYAGS AND TERRANS WERE RUTHLESSLY CUT DOWN BY KRAL BLASTERS, BUT FIGHTING BRAVELY SIDE, BY SIDE, THEY STRUGGLED TO HOLD BACK A SUPERIOR ENEMY.



ON STARFIRE, VOTH'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND ACTED DECISIVELY . . .



A BOLT FROM THE BATTLECRUISER'S HEAVY GUN SMASHED VOYAGER'S MAIN RADIO TRANSMITTER.



JON TAPPED OUT A PROGRAMME INTO VOYAGER'S CENTRAL COMPUTER—A TOP SECRET PROGRAMME KNOWN ONLY TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.

SECURE VOTH AND GET EVERYONE BACK INTO THE SPHERES. WE HAVE ONLY A FEW MINUTES—SO HURRY!



AS THEY RETREATED TO THE SPHERES, KRAL TROOPS STORMED ACROSS THE DOCKING ARM.

COME ON, KOSMO! WE'RE ALL INSIDE... SAVE YOURSELF!





SECONDS TICKED AWAY, THEN, SUDDENLY, VOYAGER'S COLOSSAL STRUCTURE SHOOK VIOLENTLY...



JON'S INSTRUCTIONS GAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME FOR THE SPHERES TO GET CLEAR BEFORE TRIGGERING AN IRREVERSIBLE CHAIN REACTION IN VOYAGER'S NUCLEAR ENGINES.



THE FIREBALL ENGULFED THE REMAINS OF THE ANCIENT COLONY SHIP AND THE BATTLECRUISER STARFIRE WITH ITS DEADLY CARGO OF KRAL ASSAULT BATTALIONS.

THE ANNIHILATION OF THE KRAL ASSAULT FORCE WAS DETECTED ON ZARDON AND THE GRATEFUL SPACEFLEET TOWED THE SCATTERED SPHERES TO THE PLANET MX-7.

THE TERRANS HAVE OFFERED ALL THE TECHNOLOGY WE NEED ...

... AND YOU, KOSMO, ARE WELCOME TO SETTLE HERE.

THANKS FOR THE OFFER! BUT I MUST COMPLETE MY DEAL ... I OWE MY FRIEND BLANE A NEW SHIP ...

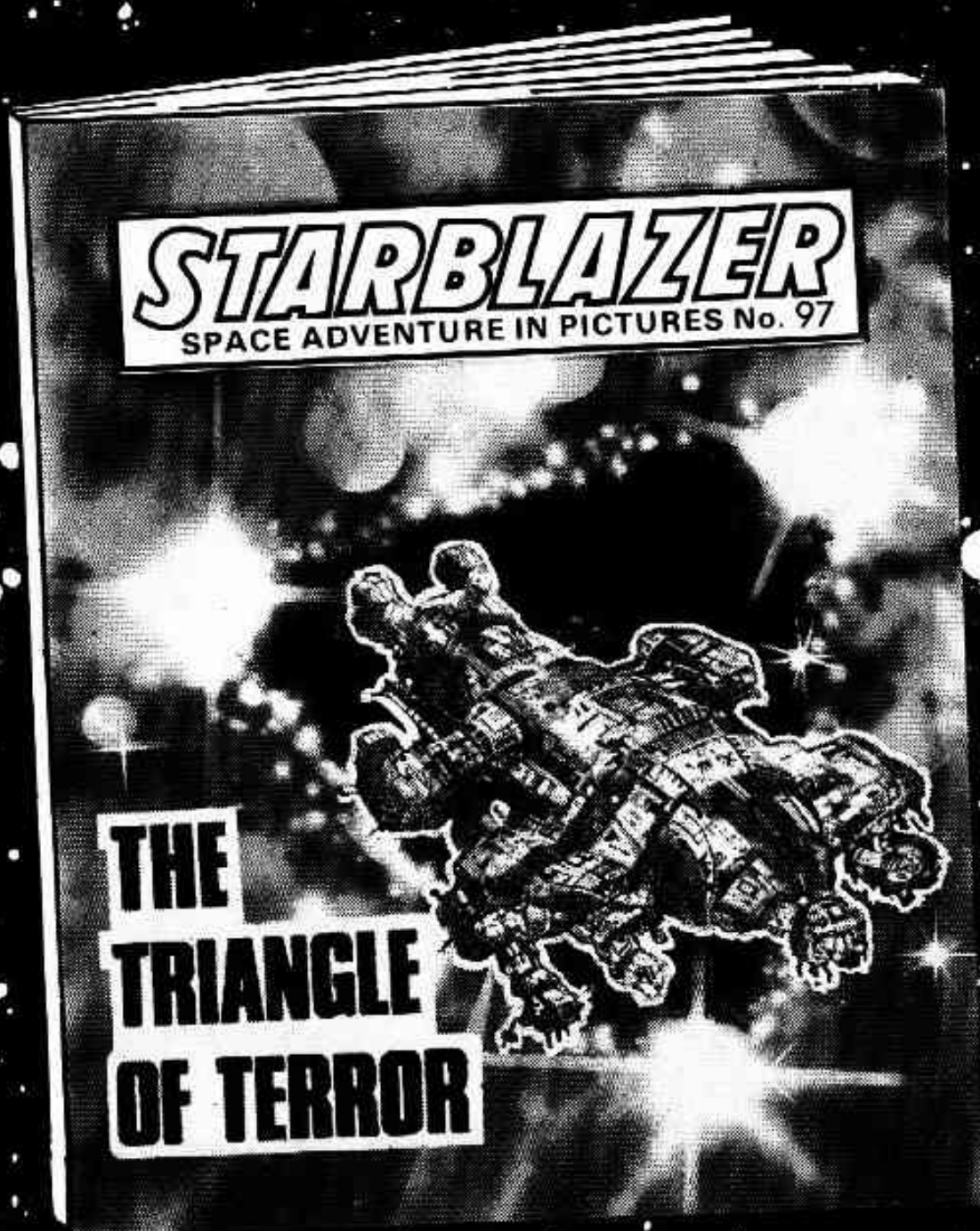


... AND JOINING SPACEFLEET IS THE ONLY
WAY I CAN EARN ENOUGH TO PAY HIM BACK.
ONCE THE KRAL ARE SMASHED, I SHALL
RETURN.



Printed and Published in Great Britain by D.C. THOMSON & CO., LTD.,
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